

SHAKESPEARE  
AS A LETTER-WRITER  
AND ARTIST IN PROSE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

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SHAKESPEARE  
*as a*  
LETTER-WRITER  
*and*  
ARTIST in PROSE

A DISQUISITION, TWO ANTHOLOGIES  
AND A RAMBLE

*by*  
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*To*  
*R. PAPE COWL*



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PART I  
A DISQUISITION



## INTRODUCTION

### ENGLISH LETTERS AND PROSE UNTIL SHAKESPEARE.

THE Shakespearean letters are the most versatile and vital of all the fictive letters which appear in Elizabethan literature. They stand at the head of a literary *genre* which played an important part in the development of English prose ; the need of composing letters was the earliest and most constant incentive to terseness, clarity and exactitude of statement.\* Shakespeare in his use of the written message, and in prose generally, gathers together into a sheaf all the ripest accomplishments of the age. The style of fictive letters in the novels and plays of the Tudor period is usually more finished and efficient than that of the average contemporary letter-writers. This is true, however, only when the comparison is made with average actual letters of the time. The rhetoricians and dramatists, other than Shakespeare, did not produce any fictive letters equal in vitality to the best of those written by or for members of the nobility or of country families. For letters preceding the age of Shakespeare, it is enough to mention the Paston and Stonor collections ; for genuine contemporary letters, we may recall those written by the daughters of Sir

\* The contemporary equivalent of that need would be the clarity and condensation imposed on lecturers who speak for wireless broadcasting.

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Thomas More when he was in the Tower ; that from Queen Elizabeth to Lady Norris, condoling with her on the death of her son ; two or three of Mary Queen of Scots' ; a few of Ascham's ; a few of Bacon's ; one by Essex ; and that written by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603 to his wife, when he was expecting to be executed the next morning. That one especially, although it is longer than a letter used in a play, seems to have a Shakespearean eloquence :

“ You shall now receive (my dear wife) my last words in these my last lines. My love I send you, that you may keep it when I am dead ; and my counsel, that you may remember it when I am no more. I would not by my will present you with sorrows (dear Bess), let them go to the grave, and be buried with me in the dust ; and seeing it is not the will of God that ever I shall see you more in this life, bear it patiently, and with a heart like thyself. First, I send you all the thanks my heart can conceive, or my words can express, for your many travails and cares taken for me ; which, though they have not taken effect as you wished, yet my debt to you is not the less : but pay it I never shall in this world. Secondly, I beseech you, for the love you bear me living, do not hide yourself many days ; but by your travail, seek to help your miserable fortune and the right of your poor child ; thy mourning cannot avail me, I am but dust. Thirdly, you shall understand that my land was conveyed (*bona fide*) to my child ; the writings were

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drawn at Midsummer was twelve months ; my honest cousin Brett can testify so much, and Dalberie too can remember somewhat therein : and I trust my blood will quench their malice, that have thus cruelly murdered me ; and that they will not seek also to kill thee and mine with extreme poverty. To what friend to direct thee I know not, for all mine have left me in the true time of trial ; and I plainly perceive that my death was determined from the first day. Most sorry I am (as God knows) that, being thus surprised by death, I can leave you no better estate . God is my witness, I meant you all my office of wines, or that I could have purchased by selling it ; half of my stuff, and all my jewels, but some one for the boy ; but God hath prevented all my resolutions, even that great God that worketh all in all ; but if you live free from want, care for no more, for the rest is but vanity ; love God and begin betimes to repose your trust in Him ; therein shall you find true and lasting riches, and endless comfort. For the rest, when you have travailed and wearied your thoughts, over all sorts of worldly cogitation, you shall but sit down by sorrow in the end. Teach your son also to serve and fear God whilst he is yet young, that the fear of God may grow up with him ; and then will God be a husband unto you, and a father unto him—a husband and a father which can never be taken from you. Bayly oweth me two hundred pounds, and Adrian Gilbert six hundred pounds. In Jersey, also, I have much money owing me ; besides, the arrearages of the

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wines will pay my debts ; and howsoever you do, for my soul's sake, pay all poor men. When I am gone, no doubt you shall be sought for by many, for the world thinks that I was very rich : but take heed of the pretences of men and their affections, for they last not but in honest and worthy men ; and no greater misery can befall you in this life than to become a prey, and afterwards to be despised. I speak not this (God knows) to dissuade you from marriage, for it will be best for you, both in respect of this world and of God. As for me, I am no more yours, nor you mine, death hath cut us asunder ; and God hath divided me from the world, and you from me.

“ Remember your poor child for his father's sake, who chose you, and loved you in his happiest time. Get those letters (if it be possible) which I writ to the Lords, wherein I sued for my life. God is my witness, it was for you and yours that I desired life ; but is true that I disdain myself for begging it ; for know it (dear wife), that your son is the son of a true man, and one who in his own respect despiseth death, and all his misshapen and ugly forms. I cannot write much ; God He knoweth how hardly I steal this time while others sleep ; and it is also high time that I should separate my thoughts from the world. Beg my dead body, which living was denied thee, and either lay it at Sherborn (if the land continue), or in Exeter Church, by my father and mother : I can say no more ; time and death call me away.

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“ The everlasting God, infinite, powerful, and inscrutable ; that Almighty God which is goodness itself, mercy itself, the true life and light, keep thee and thine, have mercy on me, and teach me to forgive my persecutors and false accusers, and send us to meet again in His glorious kingdom ! My true wife, farewell ! bless my poor boy ; pray for me, and let my good God hold you both in His arms.

“ Written with the dying hand of sometime thy husband, but now (alas !) overthrown.

“ Yours that was, but now not my own.

WALTER RALEIGH.”\*

Besides such letters, the more deliberate compositions of the literary men seem deficient in feeling and power, and they do not often attain the modern fitness for purpose outside the plays of Shakespeare. Where they are usually successful in catching the accents of life is in farce and comedy, because in these there was a stronger native tradition of character. We can get occasionally an epistle to compare with the aptest composition of Shakespeare’s ; but usually it is not to be found in a

\* The reader of the 2 vol. “ Life ” of Raleigh by Edward Edwards (1868) will find variant readings of this letter, owing to the fact that the original M.S. was not preserved. It is given here in modernised spelling, partly because the old spelling cannot be attributed to Raleigh as it stands, and therefore is less interesting, and also on account of the length of the letter, which makes ease in reading desirable. This principle is obeyed elsewhere below.

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pre-Shakespearean play. The following lively example is in Greene's *Tu quoque*, by John Cook, which may possibly have been printed first in 1599, but in the absence of enough evidence is to be dated 1614. In the opening scene, the Wench with the basket of haberdashery approaches Spendall, and says :

“Mistress Tickleman has sent you a letter, and expects your company at night ; and entreats you to send her an angel, whether you can come, or whether you cannot.”

(Spendall reads :)

“Sweet rascal ; if your love be as earnest as your protestation, you will meet me this night at supper : you know the rendezvous. There will be good company ; a noise of choice fiddlers ; a fine boy with an excellent voice ; very good songs, and bawdy ; and, which is more, I do purpose myself to be exceeding merry ; but if you come not, I shall pout myself sick, and not eat one bit to-night.

Your continual close friend,  
Nan Tickleman.

“I pray send me an angel by the bearer, whether ye can come, or whether ye cannot.”

Between the class of letters which were a literary device in novels and plays, and the familiar private letter, there is a body of long, somewhat formal letters, exemplified by the Spenser-Harvey correspondence, which are essentially essays.

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Before examining the various influences at work in Elizabethan prose it is instructive to re-read some typical and diverse fifteenth and sixteenth century letters. A number of these are quoted in Part IV below, to illustrate particular questions, but a few others in this context may serve as landmarks in the progressive efficiency of ordinary English prose, which was the soil out of which sprang the nobler achievements. The rhythmically balanced phrasing of Bible prose, for instance, is heard clearly in the more colloquial prose of letters. Margaret Paston's affectionate letter, written, Saturday, 28th September, 1443, to her husband, has the following postscript :

“ My mother greet you well, and sendeth you God’s blessing and hers ; and she prayeth you, and I pray you also, that ye be well dited of meat and drink, for that is the greatest help that ye may have now to your healthward. Your son fareth well, blessed be God !

There was a native quality in the unpremeditated rhythmical balance which gave life to the artificial antithesis of euphemism more than a century later. It may owe something to the Old English verse, which was divided by alliteration, so that the clauses tended to balance one another. But English prose from the time of Chaucer, or rather, from that of King Alfred, was by no means merely “ Anglo-Saxon.” The earliest of the following examples are Norman rather than Saxon,

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and until the Tudor age Latin and Anglo-French were nearly always used officially. The Pastons and Stonors—representative of the best fifteenth-century English—use a language which is already a virile product of several mingled strains. Without drawing at all on the Paston Letters which, on their publication last century, were denounced as a modern forgery because they seemed so natural and vivid, it is easy to quote a variety of letters covering longer than the period under review and all of them unexpectedly “natural” to modern readers. Indeed, if we take one of the very earliest extant examples of correspondence in English, the same holds true of the style, though it is noticeable how much stabilisation orthography had yet to undergo. The following is a fragment of a letter written about 1418 by King Henry the Fifth, a man who in our imagination owes a good deal to Shakespeare. This note on the safe keeping of the Duke of Orleans, his prisoner, is a remarkably plain piece of straightforward prose :

“ Furthermore I wold that ye comend\* with my brothe, with the Chanceller, with my cosin of Northumberland, and my cosin of Westmerland, and that ye set a gode ordinance for my North Marches, and specialy for the Duc of Orlans, and for alle the remanant of my prisoners of France, and also for the K. of Scoteland ; for as I am secrely enfourmed by a man of ryght notable estate in this lond that there hath ben a man of the Ducs

\* Communed.

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of Orlance in Scoteland, and accorded with the Duc of Albany that this next somer he schal bryng in the mamnet\* of Scotlond to sturre what he may. And also that ther schold be founden weys to the havyng awey specialy of the Duc of Orlans, and also of the K. as welle as of the remanant of my forsayd pryoners that God do defende. Wherfore I wolde that the Duc of Orlance be kepte stille withyn the Castil of Pontefret with owte goying to Robertis or to any othre disport, for it is bettr he lak his disport then we were disceyved. Of all the remanant dothe as ye thenketh.”†

This is believed to have been written to an esquire named Robert Waterton, to whose care Charles Duke of Orleans was consigned at the castle of Pontefract. Waterton writes to the King in 1420, just before the latter's marriage with Katherine of France :

“ Ryght excellent hegh and ryght myghty Prynce and most dredde sovereyne Lorde.”

\* Mammet, puppet.

† The subject of the letter remained a prisoner in England for 24 years. In 1430, when removed to the Tower, he composed the Book of Sonnets, which is preserved in illuminated manuscript in the British Museum. Another poet-prince and prisoner of Henry V of England was James the First of Scotland. The metrical accomplishments of such men was typical of the feudal society which was being transformed by the spirit of the renaissance. The sonneteering of the King of Navarre and his nobles in *Love's Labour's Lost* is historically true.

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and so on, in the conventional mode of address. After promising diligence in carrying out the instructions he has received in letters from the King at Rouen, namely, to stir up the country gentlemen to go, suitably armed and arrayed, and do service to the king, he concludes :

“ Ryght excellent, hegh, and ryght myghty Prynce  
and most dredde sovereyne Lorde I beseche the blissid  
Trinite to spedē \*zowe and kepe zowe, and all zour  
worshipfull oste, and sende zowc sone in to zour roialme  
of Inglande wyth a joyouse maryage and a gude pees for  
his mykill mercy. Writin at zour awne logge of  
Metheleye† the xiij daye of April

zour trewe liegc man and  
subgitte ROBT. WAT'TON.”

Princess (afterwards Queen) Mary, the sister of Henry VIII, writes this letter to Secretary Cromwell which lacks nothing in conciseness and precision. There is even a suspicion of Americanism in the spelling :

“ Maister Cromewell I commende me to you, and  
hertely thanke you for your kyndenes and favor lately  
shewed at my desyre unto my servante Richard Wilbram  
in the bihalfe of his father. I now eftstones desire and  
hertely, praye you to shewe your laufull favor and goodnes

\* z-e-y.

† Methley, where the King had his Lodge, was near Pontefract.

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unto Sir Rice Mauncell this beirer, in suche matters and buysenes as he is a suter unto you ; for the said Sir Rice hathe maried oon of my gentilwomen, whome, for her long and acceptable service to me done, I myche esteme and favor. Wherfore if ye wolde, at this my desyre, extende your goodnes and favor unto him in that bihalfe, so that he myght perceive his said suit th'rather therby to take good effecte, ye theryn shulde mynestre unto me veraye acceptable pleasor, whiche I shall herafter remembre accordingly. From Otforde the xxviij th daye of June."

And of Henry the Eighth's letters it is enough merely to mention those to Ann Boleyn, and to quote the curious memorandum to the Lord Steward and other officers of the Household, appointing the diet for the Lady Lucy (1533) :

" By the King.

" Henry R.

" We wol and commande you to alleue dailly from hensforth, unto our rightdere and welbilovede the Lady Lucy, into hir Chambre, the dyat and fare herafter ensuying. Furst, every mornyng at Brekefast oon Chyne of Beyf at our Kechyn ; oon chete loff and oon maunchet at our Pantry barr ; and a galon of Ale at our Buttrye barr. Item, at Dyner a pese of Beyfe, a stroke of Roste, and a Rewarde at our said kechyn ; a cast of chete Brede at our Panatrye bar ; and a galone of Ale

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at our Buttrye barr. Item, at after none, a manchet at our Panatrye Barr ; and half a Galon of Ale at our Buttrye Barr."

It may be well to interrupt this enumeration to remark that the rations being allotted would have been intended for the servants of the Lady Lucy as well as for herself. Supper, and "after supper" are liberally allowed for in the same way, and there is provision for fagots, wax, "candells white lights" and torches, and "six white cuppes" weekly.

The stabilisation of government under the Tudors, and the spread of printing, helped in establishing the first rough uniformity in spelling and construction. Although the letters written in the mid-portion of the sixteenth century show the widest diversity, the novelists and satirists and, later, the first playwrights used the press to carry on the work which the stamp of creative genius was soon to make permanent. Private correspondence was the last ditch in which personal caprice in spelling and construction could stand out against King's English. Unfortunately King's English for a time was inclined to become what Kirk, writing to Gabriel Harvey, described as "a gallimaufrey or hodge-podge of al other speches," so that the practice of private letter-writing was also a help in preserving the native tang. As a rule the prose in Elizabethan plays, and the letters, where they are not in verse, whether satirical or serious, are, taken as a whole, the most

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various and lively colloquial prose of the time. The affectations of speech, which were liberally satirised by the writers, came of the excessive enthusiasm of youth. English had only just become a universal tongue, for Chaucer was but an early herald of things to come. Latin was still a second tongue for educated people, run very close by French. Many people used English, French or Latin according to the mind of their correspondent ; it is not surprising, therefore, that an educated writer who condescended to use English when addressing another educated person found it almost natural to sprinkle foreign phrases among the native sentences.

It is a sign of the gradual and slow adoption of English that the preserved letters of the young Prince Edward to his mother, Queen Catherine Parr, his father, Henry VIII, and his aunt, the Princess Mary, should have been at different times in any of the three languages English, French or Latin. English letter-writing, however, was clearly fashionable as well as common by the second half of the sixteenth century. Besides the correspondence of Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth—by itself significant of the growing fashion—there are also at this period the letters of noblemen and statesmen, divines, gentlemen, scholars and merchants—altogether a considerable epistolary literature in English. The correspondence of the Tudor sovereigns alone provides an interesting commentary on one section of the literature of the age, the historical plays.

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The more typical letters written by Mr. Recorder Fleetwood to Lord Burghley, between 1569 and 1590, describing the activities of the police and giving tit-bits of city news, cast a lurid light on the London which was known to the Elizabethan dramatists. The name of the gentleman referred to in one of these letters reminds us immediately of the world of *Every Man In His Humour*:

“ M. Nowell of the Court haith lately been here in London. He caused his man to geve a blowe unto a carrman. His man haithe stricken the carrman with the pumell of his swaord and therwith haith broken his skelle and killed hym. Mr. Nowell and his man are lyke to be indicted ; whereof I am sure to be muche trobled, what with lettres and his frynds, and what by other meanes as in the verie like case heretofore I have byn even with the same man. Here are sunderie yonge gentilmen that use the Court that most commonly terme theymselffs gyntylmen. When any of these have done any thinge amisse and are compleyned of, or arrested for debt, they then runne unto me, and no other excuse or aunswere can they make but saye ‘ *I am a fyntylman, and being a fyntylman I am not thus to be used at a slave and a colons handes.*’ ”

Savouring still more of the spacious days of Elizabethan dramatists is the next story Mr. Fleetwood goes on to relate :—

“ Hit was my chaunce to examine a matter in the

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Court holden at Bridwell. I have ben complayned of to the Counsel bord. I was sent for. Mr. Secretary received my aunswere, and told the compleynaunts that they deserved to be hanged. And this is the case. Abraham of Abraham a gentilman of an hundred pound land in Com. Lanc., put his dawghter and heire unto my lady Gerrerde of the Brenne. Sir Thomas and my lady being here in London, one Dwelles, a fenser nere Cicell howse, and his wiff, by indirect meanes, being of kyn to the girle, dyd invite all my lady's children and gentil-women unto a breakfast. They cam thether, and at theire commyng the yowthes and servingmen were caried up to the ffens skolle. My Ladys dowghters and gentilwomen must nedes play at the cardes, will they, nill they. The girle Abraham, by the wiff of the howse, was conveyghe in to a chamber, and shut the dowre after her and there left her. The Girl found in the chamber iiij or v. tall men. She knew theym not. And ymediatlie the girl fell into a great feare seying them to compasse her about. Then began an old priest to read upon a booke, his words she understood not, saving these words : 'I Henry take the Suzane to my wedded wiff', &c. This done they charged the wenche never to discover this to any body lyving ; and so sent her downe to her fellowes. And dyner being done the wenche told to her fellowes very lamentably what had ben donne ; and they over to S<sup>r</sup> Tho. and my La. And upon complaynt I sent for the ffenders wiff who wold confesse nothyng. I went with her my self

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to Bridwell, where there was a full Court, and thether cam Sir Thomas with the wenche, and there we bolted owt the wholl matter and dyd no more. The ffensers wyff is returned to the Cownter. The wenche is with my La. Gerrerd. She was never in Bridwell, as the ffenser and one Poollwhele dyd avouche to some of my Lords. The wenche was there to accuse the fenders wiff in open Court. ”

Roguery was a not unimportant subject of public interest at this time. *The Groundworke of Conny-Catching*, a tract printed about 1566-70 was one of many detailed descriptions of the outlaws of Elizabethan society. Greene, the first of the dramatists to expose in detail the lurid underworld, was followed by many others. Dekker's *Belman of London, bringing to light the most notorious Villanies that are now practiced in the Kingdom* was a notable and popular work. Violence in the social life of the time was not confined to vagabonds and rogues. Gentry and pscudo-gentry constantly indulged in raids and duels ; and seduction, if not rape, was a joke. The prevalence of swords in Elizabethan plays was matched by the street affrays. In the words of a contemporary :

“ Our nobility wear commonly swords or rapiers with their daggers, as doth every common serving-man also that followeth his lord and master. Some desperate cutters we have in like sort, which carry two daggers or

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two rapiers in a sheath always about them, wherewith in every drunken fray they are known to work much mischief."

All this is, of course, reflected in the drama of the period. The fatal street quarrelling, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the highway robbery by Falstaff and his friends, and the tavern scenes are no libellous reflection of Shakespeare's London.

Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, which was published in 1553 and ran through several editions during the century, shows that in the sophisticated society of the court many affectations of refinement already marked the use of the native language some decades before the dramatists began to satirise fashionable tricks. The two main artificial styles are exemplified in Lyly's popular *Euphues* and in Sidney's *Arcadia*. The *Arcadia* was published in 1588, and strengthened the reaction against Euphuism, which thenceforward rapidly declined in favour, as is indicated by the popular and versatile Greene's abandonment of this style about 1590. It coincides with Greene's adoption of blank verse, and since Marlowe was responsible for that, it is noteworthy that Marlowe does not betray the influence of Euphuism. Perhaps Nash's attack in the *Anatome of Abuses* (1589) on Greene's euphuism was the immediate cause of that novelist-dramatist's significant change of front; but it is none the less typical of the time. When Shakespeare wrote his early comedies it was no longer possible for a

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dramatist to use the euphuistic style seriously, though the author of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *All's Well that Ends Well* does not fail to get the utmost literary value out of the discredited style, and in *Othello* (see Section 3, below) he fairly justifies a judicious employment of its essential elements.

It is to be noted that Shakespeare rarely makes open fun of Lyly's style, and the clearest instance is *Henry IV* (*II, iv*), where he puts into the mouth of the low comedy Falstaff a close parody of *Euphues* (e.g. : "for, Harry, now I do not speak to thee in drink, but in tears ; not in pleasure, but in passion ; not in words only, but in woes also . . ."). Parody of euphuism is implied in the language of characters like Armado and Holofernes, but what seems more deliberately aimed at is the Spanish affectation called Gongorism, and this was closer to the manner of Sidney's *Arcadia* than to that of Lyly's *Euphues*. Armado's letters to the King prevent us agreeing with Landmann, who said that Shakespeare's bombastic Spaniard was not intended to suggest any parody of *Euphues*, but undoubtedly the bombast and hyperbole which are the chief characteristics of Armado's inflated style have reference rather to Arcadianism than to Euphuism. Gongorism received its distinguishing name from Don Luis de Gongora y Argote, who did not adopt it until about 1600, but it was in vogue in Spain long before. A likely English source of this inflated and tedious eloquence of Spanish romance, apart from the work of Sidney, who avoided euphuism, is Thomas

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Lodge's prose. Spanish was almost as well known as Italian in England during the later Elizabethan period, and Lodge was only one of the translators of Spanish romances. Here is the opening of Lodge's translation (1596), "*A Marguerite of America* :

"The blushing morning gan no sooner appear from the desired bed of her old paramour, and remembering hir of hir Cephalus, watered the bosome of swete flonres with the Christal of hir teares."

Here is the opening of *Arisbas Euphues*, by John Dickenson (1594), who is overzealously imitating the style not of Euphues but of the *Arcadia* :

"The sunne soiourning in his winter mansion had disrobed Arcadia of all her Treasures, and disgarnished Vestaes mantle of delightes variable choice wherewith Flora had in plentie poudred the freshnesse of her earst-green hue."

In exaggerated Arcadianism, or Gongorism, there is a tediously slow unfolding of flowery clauses, full of conceits. But the artificial elaboration of metaphor has not the glitter which Euphuism imparted to it by the succession of pointed antitheses, and it is often full of hyperbole, which is not an essential feature of Euphuism. The euphuistic style was already an exaggerated fashion when *Euphues* appeared. It was traced by Dr.

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Landmann to Spain ; but the loading of clauses with metaphors borrowed from antiquity and from what was supposed to be natural history, is chiefly Italian in origin, Petrarch and Pliny having been the chief models. Llyl's *Euphues* is derived from North's translation (1557) of a fictitious biography of Marcus Aurelius, by the Spanish Don Antonio de Guevara. There were many other English writers' versions of the remaining works by the Spanish Archbishop, whose *alto estilo* was so admired in its English dress that *Euphues* was only one of the many experiments it inspired. George Pettie's *A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure*, and North's *Diall of Princes* (which includes the *Marcus Aurelius*) are two of the chief of these. English euphuism added to Guevara's *alto estilo* the alliteration which always emphasises the balance of antitheses. In the translation of the *Marco Aurelio* in *The Diall of Princes*, North begins the Prologue :

“ The greatest vanitye that I fynde in the world is, that vayne men are not only content to be vaine in their life : but also procure to leave a memory of their vanity after their death Many of the world are so fleshed in the world, that although it forsaketh them in deedes : yet they wyl not forsake it in their desires. For the remembrance of the pleasure past greatly augmenteth the pains present.”

There are two or three interesting observations to be

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made about this brief passage, emphasising the continuity and universality of European literature. The idea in the final sentence is clearly taken by the Spanish Guevara from Dante's *Purgatory*, where the pilgrim questions the tormented shades of Francesca and Paolo. De Musset quoted it in "Souvenir," and contradicted it. North's alliteration here is mainly what R. L. Stevenson noted as the most natural to English, the p-b and the f-v; but whereas the f and v sounds are obtained about as frequently from Anglo-Saxon or Germanic as Latin, the common p is more often procured with words derived from Latin origins. The almost equally common k sound is supplied chiefly by Anglo-Saxon and Greek roots.\* Alliteration is like a text on the heterogeneous constitution of the language. It is worth noting also, that North used repetition freely and effectively, just as the composers of the English prayer-book used it. The motive for this repetition is probably the strengthening of the alliteration and the antithetical balance, but it has also the background of the Hebrew parallelism which pervades the Old Testament. Thus a good many elements of Euphuism are an ineradicable part of English prose.

The conciseness of the Shakespearean letters, except where parody is intended, is a true reflection of a need felt by correspondents of the time, although it is no doubt also a dramatic device to avoid tediousness. A

\* That is to say in English generally, not the quoted passage.

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study of pre-Shakespearean plays leads one to the conclusion that the regular use of prose for letters in plays written mainly or partly in verse is a peculiarity of Shakespeare. Like his masterly use of a double time scale, which gave the effect of unity and yet seemed to cover an important span of his chief characters' lives, the letters in Shakespeare's plays show the original vitality of a genius improving his tools.

The dramatic device of letters was familiar to the earliest dramatists, probably because they found it in the Latin playwrights first and then gradually discovered its value in lending a touch of realism to the scene. At any rate, in Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, which dates before 1566, we find that the love letters and tokens to the widow Dame Custance are an effective element of the comedy. This anticipation in comedy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* shows the influence of the dramatic construction practised by Terence and Plautus. And in 1581 ten plays translated from Seneca by five English authors about 20 years earlier were collected and printed. But all these were in rhymed verse; blank verse was unknown until the Countess of Pembroke made use of it, translating Garnier's *Antony* in 1590, and Marlowe with *Tamburlaine*, in the same year, triumphed with it.

Marlowe provides an instructive contrast with Shakespeare in his use of the letter and in his mixture of verse and prose. More often than in Shakespeare, in proportion to the letters which are given, letters are merely

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referred to by a character, as when Magnetes, a lord (*Tamb. I, ii*), says :

“ And since we have arrived in Scythia,  
Besides rich presents from the puissant Cham,  
We have his highness’ letters to command  
Aid and assistance, if we stand in need.

*Tamburlaine* :

“ But now you see these letters and commands  
Are countermanded by a greater man,  
And through my provinces you must expect  
Letters of conduct from my mightiness,  
If you intend to keep your treasure safe.”

Or, in *The Jew of Malta*, which contains more references to letters than any other play of Marlowe, Mathias “ reading a letter ” (III, ii), Abigail giving “ a paper ” to Friar Barnardine, and saying “ by my father’s practice, which is there set down at large . . . ”, Barabas entering (IV, v) “ reading a letter,” and quoting a few words from it. The only letter, the text of which is given, is the one which, after the stage direction *pen and ink* (IV, iv), he proceeds to write in consultation with Pilia-Borsa. It is the letter which Barabas is seen reading in scene v, and it is in prose, probably because the whole of scene iv up to this point is in prose, though just afterwards Ithamore and Bellamira, Pilia having departed with the letter, speak in verse again until Pilia’s return. This is evidently in obedience to one of

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the rules observed by Shakespeare, that superiors talking to a subordinate (who usually speaks prose) use prose also. The business of writing the second letter to Barabas, the chief action in scene iv of Act IV, and the composition aloud remind one of a remarkable example in the *First Part of Ieronimo*, which, however, may owe its special character to Shakespeare's example.

The entries in Henslowe's *Diary* show that "Ieronimo" was being acted by Lord Strange's men from February, 1591. But F. S. Boas (Introduction to the *Works of Thomas Kyd*) thinks with Schick that the entries refer to *The Spanish Tragedie* because he does not believe that the extant *First Part of Ieronimo* is by Kyd. Professor Boas maintains that internal evidence shows it to have been written after 1600, probably during the revival of *The Spanish Tragedie* in 1602 with Ben Jonson's Additions. The farcical melodrama in this case cannot be regarded as preceding Shakespeare, so that the use of the device of letters and letter-writing may owe something to Shakespeare as well as to Kyd's pre-Shakespearean *Spanish Tragedie*, where letters are used. In the latter, Act III, Scene i, we have :

*Enter AMBASSADOR.*

*Ambassador.*

Stay, hold a while,  
And here, with pardon of his Majesty,  
Lay hands upon *Villuppo*.

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*Viceroy of Portingale.*

Ambassador,

what news hath urg'd this sudden entrance ?

*Ambassador.*

Know, Sovereign Lord, that *Balthazar* doth live.

*Viceroy.*

What Sayest thou ? liveth *Balthazar* our son ?

*Ambassador.*

Your highness' son, L(ord) *Balthazar* doth live ;

And, well entreated in the Court of Spain,

Humbly commends him to your Majesty.

These eyes beheld, and these my followers ;

With these, the letters of the Kings commends

(*Gives him Letters.*)

Are happy witnesses of his highness' health.

*The KING looks on the Letters, and proceeds :*

*Viceroy.*

*Thy sonne doth live, your tribute is received ;*

*Thy peace is made, and we are satisfied.*

*The rest resolve upon as things proposed*

*For both our honours and thy benefit.*

*Ambassador.*

These are his highness' farther articles.

(*He gives him more Letters.*)

*Viceroy.*

Accursed wretch, to intimate these ills . . .

And in Scene ii of the same Act, Hieronimo's soliloquy is interrupted when

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(*A Letter falleth.*)

What here? a letter? tush, it is not so:  
A letter written to *Hieronimo*.

*Red ink*

*For want of ink receive this bloody writ :  
Me hath my hapless brother hid from thee ;  
Revenge thyself on Balthazar and him,  
For these were they that murdered thy son.  
Hieronimo, revenge Horatio's death,  
And better fare than Bel-imperia doth.*

Reflecting on "this unexpected miracle," Hieronimo decides that he will do nothing rash but endeavour "to confirm this writ."

As Kyd's *Spanish Tragedie* is undoubtedly pre-Shakespearean, another example of the letter device may be quoted from it. In Act III, Scene vii, Hieronimo is again talking to himself of grief and revenge in the manner of Hamlet when

[Enter HANGMAN, with a letter.]

*Hangman.* O Lord, sir: God blesse you, sir: the man, sir, Petergade, sir, he that was so full of merrie conceits—

*Hieronimo.* Well, what of him?

*Hangman.* O Lord, sir, he went the wrong way; the fellow had a faire commission to the contrary. Sir, here is his passport; I pray you, sir, we have done him wrong.

*Hieronimo.* I warrant thee, give it me.

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*Hangman.* You will stand between the gallows and me?

*Hieronimo.* I, I.

*Hangman.* I thank your Lordworship.

[*Exit HANGMAN.*]

*Hieronimo.*

And yet, though somewhat neerer me concerns,  
I will, to ease the grief that I sustain,  
Take truce with sorrow while I read on this.

*My Lord, I write as mine extreames required,*  
*That you would labour my delivery;*

*If you neglect, my life is desperate,*  
*And in my death I shall reveale the truth.*

*You know, my Lord, I slew him for your sake,*  
*And was confederate with the Prince and you;*  
*Won by rewards and hopeful promises,*  
*I hope to murder Don Horatio too.*

The alternations of verse and prose, a feature of Shakespeare, is seen here in his predecessor, but it is notable that Shakespeare would have put such letters as the above in prose. The most remarkable letter incident in *The First Part of Hieronimo* is Act II, Scene iii, where Hieronimo, trussing his points, instructs Horatio, phrase by phrase, in the composition of a letter to Don Andrea, the Spanish Ambassador. At last :

*Hieronimo.* So, now read it o'er.

*Horatio.* Signor Andrea, 'tis a villainous age this,

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*that a Nobleman should be a Knave as well as an Ostler, or a Servant, or a broker ; yet I speak not this of Lorenzo ; he's an honest Lord, and has hired one to murder you, when you return from Portugal : yet he's an honest Duke's son, but not the honest son of a Duke. O that villainy should be found in the great chamber, and honesty in the bottom of a cellar.*

*Hieronimo.* True, boy : their's a moral in that ; as much to say, knavery in the Court and honesty in a cheese house.

*Horatio.* If you be murdered, you may : if you be not, thank God and Hieronimo : if you be, thank the devil and Lorenzo. Thus hoping you will not be murdered, and you can choose, especially being warned beforehand, I take my leave.

*Hieronimo.* Horatio, hast thou written "leave" bending in the hams enough, like a Gentleman usher ? 'S foote, no, Horatio ; thou hast made him straddle too much like a Frenchman : for shame, put his legs closer, though it be painful.

*Horatio.* So ; 'tis done, 'tis done—*Thy assured friend against Lorenzo and the devil, little Hieronimo, Marshal.*

Isabella, wife of Hieronimo, and Lorenzo enter, and Isabella accuses Hieronimo of writing love letters to some Spanish lady.

The deliberate composition and the prose of this letter support the suggestion of Shakespearean example, assuming Boas's theory of the date of composition to be

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justified. At least it may be said that letters in pre-Shakespearean plays do not seem to be usually written in prose unless the scene in which they occur is in prose, but Shakespeare's always do, except for obvious reasons such as the rhyming of lovers. Marlowe's *Edward the Second* contains many quotations of letters, but they are quoted in the same blank verse used throughout the play, though when Levune's letter is read out in full by old Spenser to the King (IV, iv) it obeys the rule that such things should be in prose, probably because it would be read out slowly and carefully.

People did write letters carefully then. Not only was the transmission of a letter difficult, and its ultimate arrival at a destination problematical, but the business of inditing it was as troublesome to most people as it proved to Sam Weller, and they had not always the same strong motive that drove Sam to a triumphant if laborious conclusion. Letters were written in ink, which was dried by scattering sand over the writing. They were written on large sheets of paper, from 12 to 20 inches long by 10 to 15 inches wide when uncut. English paper was not made until the end of the fifteenth century, and in the Tudor age a good deal of the writing paper used still came from south-east France and north Italy. When a letter was written care was taken to close it securely. The paper was folded into an oblong packet, rather like a modern envelope, 3 or 4 inches long by 2 or 3 inches wide; a thread or strip of paper was passed through the packet, and the two ends of the

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thread were sealed together with the address. In *Hamlet* (V, i) Hamlet tells of how he "once did hold it . . . a baseness to write fair," referring the custom of those of rank or wealth to let a secretary indite their letters. When Horatio asks how the letter was sealed, Hamlet says :

" I had my father's signet in my purse,  
Which was the model of that Danish seal ;  
Folded the writ up in the form of the other,  
Subscribed it, gave't the impression, placed it safely,  
The changeling never known."

The selection of prose passages given in Part IV does not, it is scarcely necessary to say, represent more than a half of the best prose passages in Shakespeare, but for the reasons already suggested, Shakespeare's letter-writing and his other prose are part of a single characteristic which distinguishes him from his contemporaries. As illustrations of an argument not less than for literary power, the prose passages seemed to justify their place next to the anthology of his letters. Shakespeare, had he not been a dramatist, would have been a wonderful novelist.

About 25 per cent. of Shakespeare's total output is in prose, so that the following analysis of Shakespeare's practice in the use of it, as given by Henry Sharpe to the New Shakespeare Society in 1885, is valuable and extremely interesting :

HISTORY IS IN METRE.

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TRAGIC, POMPous, AND SENTIMENTAL PARTS ARE IN METRE. COMIC, JOVIAL, AND LIGHT-HEARTED PARTS ARE IN PROSE. This rule is not well expressed, and will have to be altered and enlarged.

LETTERS, PROCLAMATIONS, AND OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTS ARE IN PROSE. The only exceptions found—a letter in *Titus Andronicus*, and three out of five letters in *All's Well that Ends Well*. Lovers' rhymes not included.

POOR MEN SPEAK PROSE. This rule weak in *As You Like It*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*, and is absent from *Henry VI*, Part I and Part III, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *John*.

FOOLS SPEAK PROSE. They may be considered philosophers in disguise, speaking in a manner that is not natural to them. (The moods of mistrust and contempt are recognized by Sharpe as reasons for the use of prose).

MESSENGERS SPEAK METRE.

PERSONS WHO LOSE THE USE OF THEIR REASON SPEAK PROSE, e.g., Hamlet, Ophelia, Lear sometimes, Lady Macbeth (asleep), Lepidus (drunk), and Othello in a fit.

ASIDES ARE IN PROSE. This includes remarks upon acting in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Hamlet*.

VOLLEYS OF WORDS ARE IN PROSE. These are mostly in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

A PERSON USING AUTHORITY OVER ANOTHER SPEAKS METRE.

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SOME PERSONS SPEAK SOMETIMES PROSE, SOMETIMES METRE, ACCORDING TO THE STATE OF MIND OR THE COMPANY THEY ARE IN.

PERSONS SPEAKING TOGETHER ALL SPEAK PROSE OR ALL SPEAK METRE. If an educated man who usually speaks metre meets a poor man, both speak prose. If two educated men meet, one of whom usually speaks prose, and the other metre, there are various rules as to which gives way to the other. In many cases the one who is highest in rank decides whether prose or metre is to be spoken. At other times it is the one who takes the lead in the conversation.

LADIES SPEAK PROSE WHEN ALONE, OR NEARLY ALONE, WITH FEMALE RELATIONS . . . The exceptions are in the earlier plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and some of the early historical plays. Portia and Nerissa (*Merchant of Venice*, I, ii) speaking prose is a variation of this rule.

BROKEN ENGLISH IS IN PROSE, e.g., *Henry V*, III, iv, and V, ii. In *Merry Wives*, Evans usually speaks broken English in prose. When he has to speak metre he drops his Welshisms. In *Lear*, Edgar, when he adopts a country dialect, speaks prose.

*The special rules (as distinct from these general ones) for prose are, in HAMLET mistrust, in MEASURE FOR MEASURE doubt, in WINTER'S TALE narrative, in OTHELLO Iago's contemptuous deceit, and in LEAR Edmund's contemptuous deceit.*

Perhaps the final remark by Sharpe might be made

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more pointed if instead of “contemptuous deceit” the term “close argument” were used. It is difficult to argue closely and at length in verse. Hence also “Volleys of words” might be regarded as packed controversy and bandied wit, and so included under “close argument.” A similar need would exist for the *Winter’s Tale* prose, which Sharpe accounted for by a “special rule”—“narrative.” Shakespeare uses more prose in verse plays than the majority of the dramatists of his age until we reach those whom he seems to have influenced; but in quantity alone his prose exceeds that of others less strikingly than his use of letters. There are, comparatively, few letters in plays by other dramatists than Shakespeare, and really good ones are still more rare.



## PART II: THE LETTERS

### (a) FANATICAL FANTASIES

ONE—DON ADRIANO DE ARMADO TO THE KING OF  
NAVARRE (Love's Labour's Lost, I, i)

TWO—THE SAME GENTLEMAN TO JAQUENETTA  
(Love's Labour's Lost, IV, i)

THREE—BIRON TO ROSALINE  
(Love's Labour's Lost, IV, ii)

FOUR—FALSTAFF TO MISTRESSES PAGE AND FORD.  
(Merry Wives of Windsor, II, i)

FIVE—THE SAME TO HIS PRINCE  
(2 King Henry the Fourth, II, ii)

SIX—ORLANDO TO ROSALIND (As You Like It, III, ii)

SEVEN—ORLANDO TO ROSALIND (As You Like It, III, ii)

EIGHT—PHOEBE TO MASTER GANYMEDE  
(As You Like It, IV, ii)

NINE—VALENTINE TO SILVIA  
(Two Gentlemen of Verona, III, i)



THE LETTERS

(a) FANATICAL FANTASIMES

LETTER ONE

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST. ACT I. SC. i  
*A Letter from the magnificent Armado reporting Costard to the King.*

DULL, *with a letter, and Costard.*

*Dull.* Which is the duke's own person ?

*Biron.* This, fellow ; what wouldest ?

*Dull.* I myself reprehend his own person, for I am his grace's tharborough : but I would see his own person in flesh and blood.

*Biron.* This is he.

*Dull.* Signor Arme—Arme—commends you.  
There's villany abroad ; this letter will tell you more.

*Costard.* Sir, the contempts thereof are as touching me.

*King.* A letter from the magnificent Armado.

*Biron.* How low soever the matter, I hope in God for high words.

*Longaville.* A high hope for a low having : God grant us patience !

*Biron.* To hear ? or forbear hearing ?

*Longaville.* To hear meekly, Sir, and to laugh moderately ; or to forbear both.

*Biron.* Well, Sir, be it as the style shall give us cause to climb in the merriness.

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*Costard.* The matter is to me, Sir, as concerning Jaquenetta. The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.

*Biron.* In what manner ?

*Costard.* In manner and form following, Sir ; all those three : I was seen with her in the manor-house, sitting with her upon the form, and taken following her into the park ; which, put together, is, in manner and form following. Now, Sir, for the manner,—it is the manner of a man to speak to a woman : for the form,—in some form.

*Biron.* For the following, Sir ?

*Costard.* As it shall follow in my correction ; and God defend the right !

*King.* Will you hear this letter with attention ?

*Biron.* As we would hear an oracle.

*Costard.* Such is the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh.

*King.* [Reads.] *Great deputy, the welkin's vice-gerent, and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's God, and body's fostering patron,—*

*Costard.* Not a word of Costard yet.

*King.* *So it is,—*

*Costard.* It may be so : but if he say it is so, he is, in telling true, but so, so.

*King.* Peace.

*Costard.* —be to me, and every man that dares not fight !

*King.* No words !

## THE LETTERS

Costard. —of other men's secrets, I beseech you.

King. So it is, besieged with sable-coloured melancholy, I did commend the black-oppressing humour to the most wholesome physic of thy health-giving air ; and, as I am a gentleman, betook myself to walk. The time when ? About the sixth hour ; when beasts most graze, birds best peck, and men sit down to that nourishment which is called supper. So much for the time when : now for the ground which ; which, I mean, I walked upon ; it is ycleped thy park. Then for the place where ; where, I mean, I did encounter that obscene and most preposterous event, that draweth from my snow-white pen the ebon-coloured ink, which here thou viewest, beholdest, surveyest, or seest : but to the place, where,—it standeth north-north-east and by east from the west corner of thy curious-knotted garden : there did I see that low-spirited swain, that base minnow of thy mirth,—

Costard. Me.

King. —that unletter'd small-knowing soul,—

Costard. Me.

King. —that shallow vassal,—

Costard. Still me.

King. —which, as I remember, hight Costard,

Costard. O me.

King. —sorted and consorted, contrary to thy established proclaimed edict and continent canon, with—with,—O ! with but with this I passion to say wherewith,—

Costard. With a wench.

King. —with a child of our grandmother Eve, a

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*female ; or, for thy more sweet understanding, a woman. Him, I,—as my ever-esteemed duty pricks me on,—have sent to thee, to receive the meed of punishment, by thy sweet Grace's officer, Antony Dull ; a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, and estimation.*

*Dull. Me, an 't please you ; I am Antony Dull.*

*King. For Jaquenetta,—so is the weaker vessel called which I apprehended with the aforesaid swain,—I keep her as a vessel of thy law's fury ; and shall, at the least of thy sweet notice, bring her to trial. Thine, in all compliments of devoted and heart-burning heat of duty,*

*Don Adriano de Armado.*

*Berowne. That is not so well as I looked for, but the best that ever I heard.*

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LETTER TWO

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST, ACT IV, SC. i

*The same gentleman to Jaquenetta (wrongly delivered by  
the Clown.)*

*The Princess of France.* What's your will, Sir? What's your will?

*Costard.* I have a letter from Monsieur Biron, to one Lady Rosaline.

*Princess.* O, thy letter, thy letter; he's a good friend of mine:

Stand aside, good bearer.—Boyet, you can carve;  
Break up this capon.

*Boyet.* I am bound to serve.—

This letter is mistook, it importeth none here;  
It is writ to Jaquenetta.

*Princess.* We will read it, I swear:

Break the neck of the wax, and every one give ear.

*Boyet.* (Reads.) By heaven, that thou art fair,  
is most infallible; true, that thou art beauteous; truth  
itself, that thou art lovely. More fairer than fair,  
beautiful than beauteous; truer than truth itself, have  
commiseration on thy heroical vassal! The magnanimous  
and most illustrate king Cophetua set eye upon the perni-  
cious and indubitate beggar Zenelophon; and he it was  
that might rightly say, Veni, vidi, vici; which, to  
annothanize\* in the vulgar, (O base and obscure vulgar!)

\* Annothanise is a variation of the commoner anathomise,  
meaning anatomize.

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videlicet,\* he came, saw, and overcame† : he came, one : saw, two ; overcame, three. Who came ? the king ; why did he come ? to see ; why did he see ? to overcome ; to whom came he ? to the beggar ; what saw he ? the beggar ; whom overcame he ? the beggar. The conclusion is victory : on whose side ? the king's ; the captive is enriched ; on whose side ? the beggar's. The catastrophe is a nuptial : on whose side ? the king's ? —no, on both in one, or one in both. I am the king ; for so stands the comparison : thou the beggar ; for so witnesseth thy lowliness. Shall I command thy love ? I may : shall I enforce thy love ? I could : shall I entreat thy love ? I will. What shalt thou exchange for rags ? robes ; for tittles ? titles ; for thyself ? me. Thus, expecting thy reply, I profane my lips on thy foot, my eyes on thy picture, and my heart on thy every part.

Thine, in the dearest design of industry,

Don Adriano de Armado.

“ Thus dost thou hear the Nemean lion roar  
‘Gainst thee, thou lamb, that standest as his prey ;  
Submissive fall his princely feet before,  
And he from forage will incline to play :  
But if thou strive, poor soul, what art thou then ?  
Food for his rage, repasture for his den.”

Princess. What plume of feathers is he that indited this letter ?

\* *Videlicet* is an affectation, as *viz* had been used in letters for a long time. Sometimes *videl* was used.

† Armado has borrowed his quotation from North's *Plutarch*.

THE LETTERS

What vane? what weather-cock? did you ever hear better?

*Boyet.* I am much deceived, but I remember the style.

*Princess.* Else your memory is bad, going o'er it awhile.

*Boyet.* This Armado is a Spaniard, that keeps here in court;

A phantasm, a Monarcho, and one that makes sport  
To the prince and his book-mates.

*Princess.* Thou, fellow, a word:  
Who gave thee this letter?

*Costard.* I told you; my lord.

*Princess.* To whom shouldst thou give it?

*Costard.* From my lord to my lady.

*Princess.* From which lord, to which lady?

*Costard.* From my Lord Biron, a good master of mine,

To a lady of France, that he call'd Rosaline.

*Princess.* Thou has mistaken his letter. Come, lords, away.

Here, sweet, put up this; 'twill be thine another day.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER THREE

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST. ACT IV, SC. i  
*Biron to Rosaline (wrongly delivered).*

*Jaquenetta.* God give you good morrow, Master parson.

*Holofernes, the Schoolmaster.* Master parson, *quasi* pers-on. An if one should be pierced, which is the one?

*Costard.* Marry, Master schoolmaster, he that is likest to a hogshead.

*Holofernes.* Piercing a hogshead ! a good lustre of conceit in a turf of earth ; fire enough for a flint, pearl enough for a swine : 'tis pretty ; it is well.

*Jaquenetta.* Good Master parson (*giving a letter to Sir NATHANIEL, a Curate*), be so good as to read me this letter : it was given me by Costard, and sent me from Don Armado : I beseech you, read it.

*Holofernes.* *Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra Ruminat,* and so forth. Ah ! good old Mantuan. I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice :

—*Venetia, Venetia,*

*Chi non te vede, non te pretia.*

Old Mantuan ! old Mantuan ! Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not. *Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa.* Under pardon, sir, what are the contents ? or, rather, as Horace says in his—What, my soul, verses ?

*Sir Nathaniel.* Ay, sir, and very learned.

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*Holofernes.* Let me hear a staff, a stanze, a verse :  
lege, domine.

*Nathaniel.*

*If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love ?*

*Ah ! never faith could hold, if not to beauty vow'd ;  
Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll faithful prove ;*

*Those thoughts to me were oaks, to thee like osiers bow'd.  
Study his bias leaves and makes his book thine eyes,*

*Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend ;  
If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice.*

*Well learned is that tongue that well can thee commend ;  
All ignorant that soul that sees thee without wonder ;*

*Which is to me some praise that I thy parts admire.*

*Thy eye Jove's lightning bears, thy voice his dreadful  
thunder,*

*Which, not to anger bent, is music and sweet fire.*

*Celestial as thou art, O ! pardon love this wrong,  
That sings heaven's praise with such an earthly tongue !*

*Holofernes.* You find not the apostrophas, and so miss the accent ; let me supervise the canzonet. Here are the only numbers ratified ; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy, *caret*. Ovidius Naso was the man : and why, indeed, Naso, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention ? *Imitari* is nothing ; so doth the hound his master, the ape his keeper, the 'tired horse his rider. But, damosella virgin, was this directed to you ?

*Jauenetta.* Ay, sir ; from one Monsieur Berowne, one of the strange queen's lords.

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Holofernes.* I will o'erglance the superscript. *To the snow-white hand of the most beauteous Lady Rosaline.* I will look again on the intellect of the letter, for the nomination of the party writing to the person written unto : *Your ladyship's in all desired employment, Biron.* Sir Nathaniel, this Biron is one of the votaries with the king ; and here he hath framed a letter to a sequent of the stranger queen's, which accidentally, or by the way of progression, hath miscarried. Trip and go, my sweet ; deliver this paper into the royal hand of the King . . .

(And how did Rosaline take the poetic epistle ? When the Princess asks after the "favour" she also has received ; "Who sent it ? and what is it ?" she says :

" I would you knew.  
An if my face were but as fair as yours,  
My favour were as great ; be witness this.  
Nay, I have verses, too, I thank Biron :  
The numbers true ; and, were the numbering too,  
I were the fairest goddess on the ground :  
I am compared to twenty thousand fairs.  
O, he hath drawn my picture in this letter ! ")

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LETTER FOUR

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR. ACT II. Sc. i

*The Mistresses Page and Ford compare letters*

*Mrs. Page.* What ! have I 'scaped love-letters in the holiday time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them ? Let me see :—

(Reads.)

*Ask me no reason why I love you ; for though love use reason for his precisian, he admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I ; go to then, there's sympathy : you are merry, so am I ; ha ! ha ! then there's more sympathy ; you love sack, and so do I ; would you desire better sympathy ? Let it suffice thee, mistress Page, (at the least, if the love of a soldier can suffice,) that I love thee. I will not say, pity me, 'tis not a soldier-like phrase ; but I say, love me. By me,*

*Thine own true knight,  
By day or night,  
Or any kind of light,  
With all his might,  
For thee to fight,*

*John Falstaff.*

What a Herod of Jewry is this ?—O wicked, wicked world !—one that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age, to shew himself a young gallant ! What an unweighed behaviour hath this Flemish drunkard picked (with the devil's name) out of my conversation, that he dares in

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

this manner assay me ? Why, he hath not been thrice in my company !—What should I say to him ?—I was then frugal of my mirth :—heaven forgive me !—Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting down of men. How shall I be revenged on him ? for revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

[Enter Mistress FORD]

*Mrs. Ford.* Mistress Page ! trust me, I was going to your house.

*Mrs. Page.* And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very ill.

*Mrs. Ford.* Nay, I'll ne'er believe that ; I have to shew to the contrary.

*Mrs. Page.* 'Faith, but you do, in my mind.

*Mrs. Ford.* Well, I do then ; yet, I say, I could shew you to the contrary : O, Mistress Page, give me some counsel !

*Mrs. Page.* What's the matter, woman ?

*Mrs. Ford.* O woman, if it were not for one trifling respect, I could come to such honour !

*Mrs. Page.* Hang the trifle, woman ; take the honour : what is it ?—dispense with trifles ;—what is it ?

*Mrs. Ford.* If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment, or so, I could be knighted.

*Mrs. Page.* What !—thou liest !—Sir Alice Ford !—These knights will hack ; and so thou shouldst not alter the article of thy gentry.

*Mrs. Ford.* We burn daylight :—here, read, read ;—

### THE LETTERS

perceive how I might be knighted.—I shall think the worse of fat men as long as I have an eye to make difference of men's liking : and yet he would not swear ; praised women's modesty : and gave such orderly and well-behaved reproof to all uncomeliness, that I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words : but they do no more adhere and keep place together, than the hundredth Psalm to the tune of " Green Sleeves." What tempest, I trow, threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly, ashore at Windsor ? How shall I be revenged on him ? I think, the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease.

—Did you ever hear the like ?

*Mrs. Page.* Letter for letter ; but that the name of Page and Ford differs !—To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here's the twin-brother of thy letter : but let thine inherit first ; for, I protest, mine never shall. I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names, (sure more) and these are of the second edition. He will print them, out of doubt ; for he cares not what he puts into the press, when he would put us two. I had rather be a giantess, and lie under mount Pelion. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtles, ere one chaste man.

*Mrs. Ford.* Why, this is the very same ; the very hand, the very words. What doth he think of us ?

*Mrs. Page.* Nay, I know not : it makes me almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty. I'll entertain

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

myself like one that I am not acquainted withal ; for, sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.

*Mrs. Ford.* Boarding, call you it ? I'll be sure to keep him above deck.

*Mrs. Page.* So will I ; if he come under my hatches, I'll never to sea again. Let's be revenged on him : let's appoint him a meeting ; give him a show of comfort in his suit ; and lead him on with a fine-baited delay, till he hath pawned his horses to mine Host of the Garter.

*Mrs. Ford.* Nay, I will consent to act any villainy against him, that may not sully the chariness of our honesty. O, that my husband saw this letter ! it would give eternal food to his jealousy.

*Mrs. Page.* Why, look, where he comes ; and my good man too ; he's as far from jealousy, as I am from giving him cause : and that, I hope, is an immeasurable distance.

*Mrs. Ford.* You are the happier woman.

*Mrs. Page.* Let's consult together against this greasy knight : come hither.

THE LETTERS

LETTER FIVE

2 KING HENRY THE FOURTH. ACT II. SC. ii

*Sir John Falstaff, Knight, to his Prince.*

The Prince having received Falstaff's letter from Bardolph, exclaims : " I do allow this ween to be as familiar with me as my dog ; and he holds his place, for look you how he writes." Poins interrupts :

" 'John Falstaff, knight'—every man must know that, as often as he has occasion to name himself : even like those that are akin to the king, for they never prick their finger but they say, ' There is some of the king's blood spilt.' ' How comes that ? ' says he that takes upon him not to conceive. The answer is as ready as a borrower's cap : ' I am the king's poor cousin, sir.' "

*Prince.* Nay, they will be kin to us, or they will fetch it from Japhet. But to the letter. (Reads)

*Sir John Falstaff, knight, to the son of the king nearest his father, Harry Prince of Wales, greeting.*

*Poins.* Why, this is a certificate.

*Prince.* Peace ! (Reads.)

*I will imitate the honourable Romans in brevity.*

*Poins.* He sure means brevity in breath, short-winded.

*Prince.* (Reads.)

*I commend me to thee, I commend thee, and I leave thee.  
Be not too familiar with Poins ; for he misuses thy favours*

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*so much that he swears thou art to marry his sister Nell.  
Repent at idle times as thou mayest, and so farewell.*

*Thine, by yea and no,—which is as much as to say  
as thou uses him, JACK FALSTAFF, with my  
familiars ; JOHN, with my brothers and sisters,  
and SIR JOHN with all Europe.*

THE LETTERS

LETTERS SIX, SEVEN AND EIGHT

AS YOU LIKE IT. ACT III. SC. ii  
*Orlando sows wild rhymes in the forest.*

Rosalind, dressed as Master Ganymede, in the Forest of Arden, reads the paper Orlando has hung on a tree. The action being in the Forest of Arden, it is no matter for marvelling that the right person, though apparently a youth, should pluck this fruit and witness of love :

*From the east to western Ind,  
No jewel is like Rosalind.  
Her worth, being mounted on the wind,  
Through all the world bears Rosalind.  
All the pictures fairest lin'd  
Are but black to Rosalind.  
Let no face be kept in mind,  
But the fair of Rosalind.*

Orlando is fortunately out of earshot when Touchstone assumes the critic's mantle, and the parodist's weapon. But Touchstone is cut short by the entry of Celia, reading another paper :

*Why should this desert silent be ?  
For it is unpeopled ? No ;  
Tongues I'll hang on every tree,  
That shall civil sayings shew.  
Some how brief the life of man  
Runs his erring pilgrimage,  
That the stretching of a span*

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Buckles in his sum of age.  
Some, of violated vows  
'Twixt the souls of friend and friend :  
But upon the fairest boughs,  
Or at every sentence' end,  
Will I Rosalinda write ;  
Teaching all that read, to know  
The quintessence of every sprite  
Heaven would in hittle shew.  
Therefore heaven nature charged  
That one body should be fill'd  
With all graces wide enlarged :  
Nature presently distill'd  
Helen's cheek, but not her heart ;  
Cleopatra's majesty ;  
Atalanta's better part ;  
Sad Lucretia's modesty.  
Thus Rosalind of many parts  
By heavenly synod was devised ;  
Of many faces, eyes, and hearts,  
To have the touches dearest prized.  
Heaven would that she these gifts should have,  
And I to live and die her slave.*

Well might Rosalinda in her confusion tell Celia :  
“ I was never so be-rhymed since Pythagoras' time,  
that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember.”

In another part of the Forest more metrical letter-writing has been going on, and shepherd Silvius has to deliver to Master Ganymede a letter from his cruel

THE LETTERS

Phœbe, but Master Ganymede and Silvius see the message each from a different angle.

*Rosalind.* She Phœbes me. Mark how the tyrant writes. (*Reads.*)

*Art thou god to shepherd turn'd,  
That a maiden's heart hath burn'd ?*

Can a woman rail thus ?

*Silvius.* Call you this railing ?

*Rosalind.* (*Reads.*)

*Why, thy godhead laid apart,  
Warr'st thou with a woman's heart ?*

Did you ever hear such railing ?

*Whiles the eye of man did woo me,  
That could do no vengeance to me.*

Meaning me a beast.

*If the scorn of your bright eyne  
Have power to raise such love in mine,  
Alack ! in me what strange effect  
Would they work in mild aspect.  
Whiles you chid me, I did love ;  
How then might your prayers move !  
He that brings this love to thee  
Little knows this love in me ;  
And by him seal up thy mind ;  
Whether that thy youth and kind  
Will the faithful offer take  
Of me and all that I can make ;  
Or else by him my love deny,  
And then I'll study how to die.*

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Silvius.* Call you this chiding?

And so " by him " Master Ganymede has no message more loving for Phœbe than : " Well, go your way to her, for I see love hath made thee a tame snake, and say this to her : that if she love me, I charge her to love thee : if she will not, I will never have her, unless thou entreat for her."

THE LETTERS

LETTER NINE

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA. ACT III, SC. i.

*Valentine to Silvia.*

This is another of those epistles which fall into the wrong hands. Silvia's father reads it :

*My thoughts do harbour with my Silvia nightly ;*

*And slaves they are to me, that send them flying :*

*O, could their master come and go as lightly,*

*Himself would lodge where senseless they are lying.*

*My herald thoughts in thy pure bosom rest them,*

*While I, their King, that thither them importune,  
Do curse the grace that with such grace hath bless'd them,*

*Because myself do want my servants' fortune :*

*That they should harbour where their lord should be,*

*Silvia, this night I will enfranchise thee.*



## PART II : THE LETTERS

### (b) TANGLED LOVE

TEN—HAMLET TO OPHELIA (Hamlet, II, ii)

ELEVEN TO FOURTEEN—POSTHUMUS' FOLLY  
(Cymbeline, I, v ; III, ii, iv)

FIFTEEN TO EIGHTEEN—BERTRAM AND HELENA  
(All's Well that Ends Well, III, ii, iv)

NINETEEN—OLIVIA (forged) TO MALVOLIO  
(Twelfth Night, II, v)

TWENTY—THE MADLY-US ED MALVOLIO TO OLIVIA  
(Twelfth Night, V, i)



THE LETTERS

(b) TANGLED LOVE

LETTER TEN

HAMLET. ACT II. Sc. ii

*Hamlet to Ophelia.*

*To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautiful  
Ophelia. In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.*

*Doubt thou the stars are fire ;*

*Doubt that the sun doth move ;*

*Doubt truth to be a har ;*

*But never doubt I love.\**

*O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers : I have not  
art to reckon my groans ; but that I love thee best, O most  
best, believe it. Adieu.*

*Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this  
machine is to him, HAMLET.*

It is read to the Queen by unhappy Ophelia's father, and in spite of the ridiculous comments of Polonius as he reads it, and the mock-pedantry of the manner, it is a tragic letter.

\* *Doubt* in the third line means *suspect*.

## SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

## LETTERS ELEVEN TO FOURTEEN

CYMBELINE. ACT I. SC. V  
*Recommending the Traitor.*

It is by means of a letter of recommendation from the foolish Posthumus to her, that Iachimo introduces himself to Imogen as the first step in the campaign against her chastity, on the success of which he has wagered a fortune with the confident husband.

THE LETTERS

LETTER TWELVE

CYMBELINE. ACT III. SC. ii and SC. iv)  
*Posthumus to Imogen and Pisanio, or the Foolish Husband.*

Imogen receives a letter from her absent husband, who has been persuaded by Iachimo of her unfaithfulness.

*"Justice, and your father's wrath, should he take me in his dominion, could not be so cruel to me, as you, O the dearest of creatures, would not even renew me with your eyes. Take notice that I am in Cambria, at Milford-Haven. What your own love will, out of this, advise you, follow. So he wishes you all happiness, that remains loyal to his vow, and your, increasing in love,*

*Leonatus Posthumus."*

It is given her by Pisanio, Posthumus' servant, who also has received a letter from Posthumus, ordering him to murder Imogen. When they reach Milford-Haven, whither Imogen has insisted on travelling to meet her husband, Pisanio can no longer keep the truth from the slandered and mistrusted wife, and shows her the letter Posthumus wrote to him. Imogen reads :

*"Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the strumpet in my bed; the testimonies whereof he bleeding in me. I speak not out of weak surmises; from proof as strong as my grief, and as certain as I expect my revenge. That part, thou, Pisanio, must act for me, if thy faith be not tainted with the breach of hers. Let thine own hands take away*

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*her life : I shall give thee opportunities at Milford-Haven : she hath my letter for the purpose : where, if thou fear to strike, and to make me certain it is done, thou art the pander to her dishonour, and equally to me disloyal ”*

But Posthumus, as a prisoner, dreams a dream, and awakes to find this message lying on his breast (Act V, Scene iv) :

*“ When as a lion’s whelp shall, to himself unknown, without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of tender air ; and when from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches, which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow ; then shall Posthumus end his miseries, Britain be fortunate, and flourish in peace and plenty.”*

When free again Posthumus consults the King’s soothsayer, whose interpretation of the message shows that the “ piece of tender air ” is Imogen, “ this most constant wife.”

THE LETTERS

LETTERS FIFTEEN TO EIGHTEEN

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. ACT III, SC. ii AND iv  
*Bertram and Helena.*

Bertram writes a letter to his mother which he asks Helena to deliver. His promise to arrive home and see her there soon, like many repentant lovers' promises, was not meant to be kept. But Bertram's letter is savage :—

*I have sent you a daughter-in-law : she hath recovered the king, and undone me. I have wedded her, not bedded her ; and sworn to make the 'not' eternal. You shall hear I am run away ; know it before the report come. If there be breadth enough in the world, I will hold a long distance. My duty to you.*

*Your unfortunate son,*  
*Bertram.*

And then Helena shows the Countess the letter which Bertram has sent on for her. "Look on his letter, madam : here's my passport":

*When thou canst get the ring upon my finger,\* which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy*

\*Boccaccio's *Giletta of Narbona*:

"for I doe purpose to dwell with her, when she shall have this ring (which he wore on his finger) upon her finger."

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*body that I am father to, then call me husband : but in such a 'then' I write a 'never.'*

"A dreadful sentence," as Helena says, though we have not much sympathy nowadays for such a determined man-hunter.

The next letter in the imbroglio is from Helena to the Countess, who blames the steward for taking the letter and not stopping the writer. "Sharp stings are in her mildest words," for the Countess, but for us the sharpness is much assuaged by the unexpected indulgence in metre. The steward has to read the epistle a second time to his mistress :

*"I am Saint Jacques' pilgrim, thither gone.  
Ambitious love hath so in me offended,  
That bare-foot plod I the cold ground upon,  
With sainted vow my faults to have amended,  
Write, write, that from the bloody course of war  
My dearest master, your dear son, may hie ;  
Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far  
His name with zealous fervour sanctify :  
His taken labours bid him me forgive ;  
I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth  
From courtly friends, with camping foes to live,  
Where death and danger dog the heels of worth :  
He is too good and fair for death and me ;  
Whom I myself embrace, to set him free."*

Finally, we have the letter written to the King by Helena, but in the name of Diana. It reaches His

### THE LETTERS

Majesty just before the arrival of Diana and her mother and Helena, who all partake in what is surely one of the most absurd scenes in any play that has a claim to literary merit. But note the admirable force of this concise prose :

*Upon his many protestations to marry me when his wife was dead, I blush to say it, he won me. Now is the Count Rousillon a widower ; his vows are forfeited to me, and my honour's paid to him. He stole from Florence, taking no leave, and I follow him to his country for justice : grant it to me, O king ! in you it best lies ; otherwise a seducer flourishes, and a poor maid is undone.*

*Diana Capilet.*

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER NINETEEN

TWELFTH NIGHT. ACT II. Sc. v.

*The forged letter to Malvolio.*

The scene in Olivia's garden in which Malvolio is made a victim of his own vanity and conceit is but the prelude to the deeper cruelty of his confinement as a madman.

*In OLIVIA'S Garden.*

(SIR TOBY BELCH, SIR ANDREW AGUE-CHEEK, and FABIAN.)

*Sir Toby.* Come thy ways, signior Fabian.

*Fabian.* Nay, I'll come . if I lose a scruple of this sport, let me be boiled to death with melancholy.

*Sir Toby.* Wouldst thou not be glad to have the niggardly rascally sheep-biter come by some notable shame ?

*Fabian.* I would exult, man : you know he brought me out of favour with my lady about a bear-baiting here.

*Sir Toby.* To anger him, we'll have the bear again ; and we will fool him black and blue :—shall we not, Sir Andrew ?

*Sir Andrew.* An we do not, it is pity of our lives.

(Enter MARIA.)

*Sir Toby.* Here comes the little villain.—How now, my nettle of India ?

*Maria.* Get ye all three into the box-tree : Malvolio's coming down this walk : he has been yonder i'

## THE LETTERS

the sun, practising behaviour to his own shadow, this half-hour : observe him, for the love of mockery ; for I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him Close, in the name of jesting ! [The men hide themselves.] Lie thou there ; [Throws down a letter] for here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling.

[Exit MARIA.]

(Enter MALVOLIO.)

*Malvolio.* 'Tis but fortune ; all is fortune. Maria once told me she did affect me : and I have heard herself come thus near, that, should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than any one else that follows her. What should I think on't ?

*Sir Toby.* Here's an overweening rogue !

*Fabian.* O, peace ! Contemplation makes a rare turkey-cock of him ; how he jets under his advanced plumes !

*Sir Andrew.* 'Slight, I could so beat the rogue !

*Sir Toby.* Peace, I say.

*Malvolo.* To be count Malvolio ;—

*Sir Toby.* Ah, rogue !

*Sir Andrew.* Pistol him, pistol him.

*Sir Toby.* Peace, peace !

*Malvolo.* There is example for't ; the lady of the strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe.

*Sir Andrew.* Fie on him, Jezebel !

*Fabian.* O, peace, now he's deeply in ; look, how imagination blows him.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Malvolio.* Having been three months married to her, sitting in my state,—

*Sir Toby.* O, for a stone-bow, to hit him in the eye !

*Malvolio.* Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown ; having come from a day-bed, where I left Olivia sleeping,—

*Sir Toby.* Fire and brimstone !

*Fabian.* O, peace, peace !

*Malvolio.* And then to have the humour of state : and after a demure travel of regard,—telling them, I know my place, as I would they should do theirs,—to ask for my kinsman Toby,—

*Sir Toby.* Bolts and shackles !

*Fabian.* O, peace, peace, peace ! now, now.

*Malvolio.* Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for him : I frown the while ; and perchance wind up my watch, or play with some rich jewel. Toby approaches ; court'sies there to me,—

*Sir Toby.* Shall this fellow live ?

*Fabian.* Though our silence be drawn from us with cars, yet peace.

*Malvolio.* I extend my hand to him thus, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control,—

*Sir Toby.* And does not Toby take you a blow o' the lips then ?

*Malvolio.* Saying, “ Cousin Toby, my fortunes having cast me on your niece, give me this prerogative of speech,”—

*Sir Toby.* What, what ?

## THE LETTERS

*Malvolio.* " You must amend your drunkenness."

*Sir Toby.* Out, scab !

*Fabian.* Nay, patience, or we break the sinews of our plot.

*Malvolio.* " Besides, you waste the treasure of your time with a foolish knight,"—

*Sir Andrew.* That's me, I warrant you.

*Malvolio.* " One Sir Andrew,"—

*Sir Andrew.* I knew 'twas I ; for many do call me fool.

*Malvolio.* What employment have we here ?

(*Taking up the letter.*)

*Fabian.* Now is the woodcock near the gin.

*Sir Toby.* O, peace ! and the spirit of humours intimate reading aloud to him !

*Malvolio.* By my life, this is my lady's hand : these be her very C's, her U's, and her T's ; and thus makes she her great P's. It is, in contempt of question, her hand.

*Sir Andrew.* Her C's, her U's, and her T's : why that ?

*Malvolio.* (*Reads.*) *To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes* : her very phrases !—By your leave, wax.—Soft !—and the impression of her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal : 'tis my lady. To whom should this be ?

*Fabian.* This wins him, liver and all.

*Malvolio.* (*Reads.*) *Jove knows I love :*  
*But who ?*

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Lips do not move ;*

*No man must know.*

*No man must know.*—What follows ? the numbers altered !—*No man must know* :—if this should be thee, Malvolio ?

*Sir Toby.* Marry, hang thee, brock !

*Malvolio.* *I may command where I adore :*

*But silence, like a Lucrece knife,*  
*With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore ;*  
*M, O, A, I, doth sway my life.*

*Fabian.* A fustian riddle !

*Sir Toby.* Excellent wench, say I.

*Malvolio.* *M, O, A, I, doth sway my life.*—Nay, but first, let me see,—let me see,—let me see.

*Fabian.* What a dish of poison has she dressed him !

*Sir Toby.* And with what wing the stannyel checks at it !

*Malvolio.* *I may command where I adore.* Why, she may command me ; I serve her, she is my lady. Why, this is evident to any formal capacity. There is no obstruction in this ;—and the end,—what should that alphabetical position portend ? if I could make that resemble something in me,—Softly !—*M, O, A, I.*—

*Sir Toby.* O, ay ! make up that :—he is now at a cold scent.

*Fabian.* Sowter will cry upon’t, for all this, though it be as rank as a fox.

*Malvolio.* *M,—Malvolio ;—M,—why, that begins my name.*

## THE LETTERS

*Fabian.* Did not I say he would work it out ? the cur is excellent at faults.

*Malvolio.* M,—But then there is no consonancy in the sequel ; that suffers under probation : A should follow, but O does.

*Fabian.* And O shall end, I hope.

*Sir Toby.* Ay, or I'll cudgel him, and make him cry, O.

*Malvolio.* And then I comes behind.

*Fabian.* Ay, an you had an eye behind you, you might see more detraction at your heels, than fortunes before you.

*Malvolio.* M, O, A, I ;—this simulation is not as the former :—and yet, to crush this a little, it would bow to me, for every one of these letters is in my name. Soft ; here follows prose. (*Reads.*) *If this fall into thy hand, revolve. In my stars I am above thee ; but be not afraid of greatness : some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Thy fates open their hands ; let thy blood and spirit embrace them. And, to inure thyself to what thou art like to be, cast thy humble slough, and appear fresh. Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants : let thy tongue tang arguments of state ; put thyself into the trick of singularity : she thus advises thee that sighs for thee. Remember who commended thy yellow stockings ; and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered : I say, remember. Go to ; thou art made, if thou desirest to be so ; if not, let me see thee a steward still, the fellow of servants, and*

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*not worthy to touch fortune's fingers. Farewell. She  
that would alter services with thee,*

*The Fortunate-unhappy.*

Daylight and champain discovers not more : this is open. I will be proud, I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance, I will be point-device the very man. I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me ; for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me. She did commend my yellow stockings of late, she did praise my leg being cross-gartered ; and in this she manifests herself to my love, and, with a kind of injunction, drives me to these habits of her liking. I thank my stars, I am happy. I will be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross-gartered, even with the swiftness of putting on. Jove and my stars be praised !—Here is yet a postscript. [Reads.] *Thou canst not choose but know  
who I am. If thou entertainest my love, let it appear  
in thy smiling ; thy smiles become thee well : therefore  
in my presence still smile, dear my sweet, I pr'ythee.* Jove, I thank thee.—I will smile ; I will do everything that thou wilt have me. [Exit.

*Fabian.* I will not give my part of this sport for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy.

*Sir Toby.* I could marry this wench for this device.

*Sir Andrew.* So could I too.

*Sir Toby.* And ask no other dowry with her, but such another jest.

(Enter MARIA.)

THE LETTERS

*Sir Andrew.* Nor I neither.

*Fabian.* Here comes my noble gull-catcher.

*Sir Toby.* Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck ?

*Sir Andrew.* Or o' mine either ?

*Sir Toby.* Shall I play my freedom at tray-trip, and become thy bond-slave ?

*Sir Andrew.* I' faith, or I either ?

*Sir Toby.* Why, thou hast put him in such a dream, that, when the image of it leaves him, he must run mad.

*Maria.* Nay, but say true ; does it work upon him ?

*Sir Toby.* Like aqua-vitæ with a midwife.

*Maria.* If you will then see the fruits of the sport, mark his first approach before my lady : he will come to her in yellow stockings, and 'tis a colour she abhors ; and cross-gartered, a fashion she detests ; and he will smile upon her, which will now be so unsuitable to her disposition, being addicted to a melancholy as she is, that it cannot but turn him into a notable contempt. If you will see it, follow me.

*Sir Toby.* To the gates of Tartar, thou most excellent devil of wit ?

*Sir Andrew.* I'll make one too.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER TWENTY.

TWELFTH NIGHT. ACT V. SC. I.

*The Madly-Used Malvolio to Olivia.*

The second letter in *Twelfth Night*, a real one this time, unites the knot of the plot which Maria's forgery made. Malvolio's strangeness is still a matter of concern to his mistress. When the Clown comes before Olivia with a letter from Malvolio, she asks immediately after the unhappy "madman." The Clown replies :

Truly, Madam, he holds Belzebub at the stave's end as well as a man in his case may do ; he has here writ a letter to you ; I should have given it to you to-day morning ; but as a madman's epistles are no gospels, so it skills not much when they are delivered.

*Olivia.* Open it, and read it.

*Clown.* Look then to be well edified when the fool delivers the madman :—*By the Lord, Madam,*—

*Olivia.* How now ! art thou mad ?

*Clown.* No, Madam, I do but read madness : an your ladyship will have it as it ought to be, you must allow vox.

*Olivia.* Pr'ythee, read i' thy right wits.

*Clown.* So I do, madonna ; but to read his right wits, is to read thus : therefore perpend, my princess, and give ear.

THE LETTERS

*Olivia.* Read it you, sirrah. [To FABIAN.]

*Fabian.* [Reads.] By the Lord, Madam, you wrong me, and the world shall know it. Though you have put me into darkness, and given your drunken cousin rule over me, yet have I the benefit of my senses as well as your ladyship. I have your own letter that induced me to the semblance I put on ; with the which I doubt not but to do myself much right, or you much shame. Think of me as you please. I leave my duty a little unthought of, and speak out of my injury.

*The madly-used MALVOLIO.*

*Olivia.* Did he write this ?

*Clown.* Ay, Madam.

*Duke.* This savours not much of distraction.

*Olvia.* See him deliver'd, Fabian ; bring him hither.



## PART II : THE LETTERS

### (c) URGENT BUSINESS

TWENTY-ONE—ANDREW AGUE-CHEEK'S CHALLENGE  
(*Twelfth Night*, III, iv)

TWENTY-TWO—HAMLET TO HORATIO  
(*Hamlet*, IV, vi)

TWENTY-THREE—HAMLET TO THE KING OF DENMARK  
(*Hamlet* IV, vii)

TWENTY-FOUR—MACBETH TO HIS WIFE  
(*Macbeth*, I, v)

TWENTY-FIVE—ANTONIO TO BASSANIO  
(*The Merchant of Venice*, III, ii)

TWENTY-SIX—BELLARIO TO THE DUKE OF VENICE  
(*The Merchant of Venice*, IV, i)

TWENTY-SEVEN—X . . . . TO HENRY VIII's LORD  
CHAMBERLAIN  
(*King Henry the Eighth*, II, ii)

TWENTY-EIGHT—DUKE OF BURGUNDY TO HENRY VI  
(*1 King Henry the Sixth*, IV, i)

TWENTY-NINE—A MARRIAGE BOND  
(*2 King Henry the Sixth*, I, i)



THE LETTERS

(c) URGENT BUSINESS

LETTER TWENTY-ONE

TWELFTH NIGHT. ACT III. SC. IV

*The Cautious Challenge.*

*Sir Andrew Ague-cheek.* Here's the challenge, read it ; I warrant there's vinegar and pepper in't.

*Fabian (servant to Olivia).* Is't so saucy ?

*Sir Andrew.* Ay, is it, I warrant him : do but read.

*Sir Toby Belch.* Give me. [Reads.] Youth, whatsoever thou art, thou art but a scurvy fellow.

*Fabian.* Good and valiant.

*Sir Toby.* [Reads.] Wonder not, nor admire not in thy mind, why I do call thee so, for I will shew thee no reason for't.

*Fabian.* A good note : that keeps you from the blow of the law.

*Sir Toby.* [Reads.] Thou comest to the lady Olivia, and in my sight she uses thee kindly : but thou liest in thy throat, that is not the matter I challenge thee for.

*Fabian.* Very brief, and exceeding good senseless.

*Sir Toby.* [Reads.] I will waylay thee going home ; where, if it be thy chance to kill me,—

*Fabian.* Good.

*Sir Toby.* [Reads.] Thou killst me like a rogue and a villain.

*Fabian.* Still you keep o' the windy side of the law : good.

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

Sir Toby. [Reads.] *Fare thee well ; and God have mercy upon one of our souls ! He may have mercy upon mine ; but my hope is better, and so look to thyself. Thy friend, as thou usest him, and thy sworn enemy,*

*Andrew Ague-cheek.*

If this letter move him not, his legs cannot : I'll give't him.

## THE LETTERS

### LETTER TWENTY-TWO

HAMLET. ACT IV. Sc. vi  
*Hamlet to Horatio.*

Real letter-writers of the age rarely approached this admirable prose style, so full of meat, forceful, and alive with subtle ironies.

*Horatio, when thou shalt have over-looked this, give these fellows some means to the king : they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very war-like appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour ; in the grapple I boarded them : on the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy, but they knew what they did ;\* I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent ; and repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldest fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb ; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosen-crantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England : of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.*

*He that thou knowest thine,  
Hamlet.*

\* It has been suggested that this hints at Hamlet's fore-knowledge, and that it was this pre-arranged attack he meant when he spoke to his mother of " hoisting the engineer with his own petar."

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER TWENTY-THREE

HAMLET. ACT IV. Sc. vii

*Hamlet to the King of Denmark.*

*Messenger.* Letters, my lord, from Hamlet :  
This to your majesty : this to the queen.

*King.* From Hamlet ! who brought them ?

*Messenger.* Sailors, my lord, they say ; I saw them  
not :

They were given me by Claudio, he receiv'd them  
Of him that brought them

*King.* Laertes, you shall hear them.  
Leave us. [Exit MESSENGER.

*High and mighty,* you shall know I am set naked on  
your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your  
kingly eyes ; when I shall, first asking your pardon  
thereunto, recount the occasions of my sudden and more  
strange return. *Hamlet.*

Such a letter matches in its brevity and ironic  
pertinence the deflection of the course of the king's  
amiable plot implied in the writer's news.

## THE LETTERS

### LETTER TWENTY-FOUR

MACBETH. ACT I. SC. V.

*Macbeth, ambitious, to his ambitious wife.*

Macbeth writes to Lady Macbeth of the scene on the heath with the witches. She reads it in a room of Macbeth's castle at Inverness.

*They met me in the day of success ; and I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives\* from the king, who all-hailed me, " Thane of Cawdor " ; by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with, " Hail, king that shalt be ! " This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness ; that thou mightest not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.*

\* *Missives* = messengers. Macbeth means Ross and Angus. In *Antony and Cleopatra* (II, ii) :

" Did pocket up my letters, and with taunts,  
Did gibe my missive out of audience."

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER TWENTY-FIVE

MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT III. SC. ii.

*Bad News told Briefly : Antonio to Bassanio.*

This letter is handed to Bassanio by the messenger, who says: "Signior Antonio commends him to you."\*

*Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit ; and since, in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure : if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.*

\* "Commends himself" So Falstaff's letter to the Prince (*2 King Henry the Fourth*, II, ii), "I commend me to thee." It was a fairly common epistolary form. In Lodge and Greene's *A Looking Glasse, etc.* . "Ile commend me to you with heartie commendations."

THE LETTERS

LETTER TWENTY-SIX

MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT IV. Sc. 1.

*Bellario introduces Portia to the Duke of Venice.*

Your grace shall understand, that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick : but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome, his name is Balthasar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant : we turned o'er many books together . he is furnished with my opinion ; which, bettered with his own learning, (the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend,) comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation ; for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER TWENTY-SEVEN

KING HENRY VIII. ACT II. SC. ii.  
*To the Lord Chamberlain.*

A letter indicating the power of Wolsey and the arrogance of his followers, in the early stages of the drama. (*An Ante-chamber in the Palace.*)

*Lord Chamberlain, reading a letter.\**

*My lord.—The horses your lordship sent for, with all the care I had, I saw well chosen, riddent† and furnished. They were young and handsome, and of the best breed in the north. When they were ready to set out for London, a man of my lord cardinal's, by commission and main power, took 'em from me ; with this reason : His master would be serv'd before a subject, if not before the king ; which stopp'd our mouths, Sir.*

\* This letter has been arranged as verse.

† Trained.

THE LETTERS

LETTER TWENTY-EIGHT

I KING HENRY THE SIXTH. ACT IV. SC. 1.

*The Duke of Burgundy changes his Allegiance.*

A letter from the Duke of Burgundy to Henry VI is brought to the King, who is in Paris with a company of his English lords.

*King Henry.* And now, My Lord Protector, view the letter

Sent from our uncle Duke of Burgundy  
*Gloucester* (*viewing superscription*). What means his Grace, that he hath chang'd his style?

No more, but plain and bluntly, *To the King!*

Hath he forgot he is his sovereign ?

Or doth this churlish superscription

Pretend some alteration in good will ?

What's here ? *I have, upon especial cause,*

*Mov'd with compassion of my country's wrack,*

*Together with the pitiful complaints*

*Of such as your oppression feeds upon,*

*Forsaken your pernicious faction,*

*And join'd with Charles, the rightful King of France.*

O, monstrous treachery ! Can this be so,

That in alliance, amity and oaths,

There should be found such false dissembling guile ?

*King Henry.* What ! doth my uncle Burgundy revolt ?

*Gloucester.* He doth, my lord, and is become your foe.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*King Henry.* Is that the worst this letter doth contain?

*Gloucester.* It is the worst, and all, my lord, he writes.

*King Henry.* Why then, Lord Talbot there shall talk with him,

And give him chastisement for this abuse.

How say you, my lord? are you not content?

*Talbot.* Content, my liege! Yes: but that I am prevented,

I should have begg'd I might have been employ'd.

*King Henry.* Then gather strength, and march unto him straight:

Let him perceive how ill we brook his treason,  
And what offence it is to flout his friends.

*Talbot.* I go, my lord; in heart desiring still  
You may behold confusion of your foes.

THE LETTERS

LETTER TWENTY-NINE

2 KING HENRY THE SIXTH. ACT I. Sc. i.

*A Marriage Bond.*

The agreement for the marriage of Margaret of Anjou to the English King.

*Suffolk.* My Lord Protector, so it please your Grace, Here are the articles of contracted peace Between our sovereign and the French King Charles, For eighteen months concluded by consent.

*Gloucester.* Imprimis, *It is agreed between the French King, Charles, and William De la Pole, Marquess of Suffolk, ambassador for Henry King of England, that the said Henry shall espouse the Lady Margaret, daughter unto Reignier King of Naples, Sicilia, and Jerusalem, and crown her Queen of England ere the thirtieth of May next ensuing.* Item, *That the duchy of Anjou and the county of Maine shall be released and delivered to the king her father.—* (*Lets the paper fall.*)

*King Henry VI.* Uncle, how now !

*Gloucester.* Pardon me, gracious lord ; Some sudden qualm hath struck me at the heart And dimm'd mine eyes, that I can read no further.

*King Henry VI.* Uncle of Winchester, I pray, read on.

*Cardinal Beaufort.* Item. *It is further agreed between them, that the duchies of Anjou and Maine shall be released and delivered over to the king her father ; and*

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*she sent over of the King of England's own proper cost and charges, without having any dowry.*

*King Henry VI.* They please us well. Lord Mar-

guess, kneel down:

We here create thee the first Duke of Suffolk.

## PART II

### (d) TREACHERY.

THIRTY—X... TO HOTSPUR

(*I King Henry the Fourth, II, iii*)

THIRTY-ONE—MURDERERS' FORGERY

(*Titus Andronicus, II, iv*)

THIRTY-TWO—EDGAR (FORGED BY EDMUND) TO HIS  
FATHER, THE EARL OF GLOUCESTER (*King Lear, I, ii*)

THIRTY-THREE—GONERIL TO EDMUND

(*King Lear, IV, vi*)

THIRTY-FOUR—PAROLLES TO DIANA

(*All's Well that Ends Well, IV, iii*)



THE LETTERS

(d) TREACHERY

LETTER THIRTY

I KING HENRY THE FOURTH. ACT II. Sc. iii.

*From "a frosty-spirited rogue."*

*(Warkworth. A Room in the Castle.)*

*Hotspur (reading a letter). But for mine own part, my lord, I could be well contented to be there, in respect of the love I bear your house.*

He could be contented ; why is he not then ? In respect of the love he bears our house · he shows in this he loves his own barn better than he loves our house. Let me see some more.

*The purpose you undertake is dangerous ;—*

Why, that's certain : 'tis dangerous to take a cold, to sleep, to drink ; but I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.

*The purpose you undertake is dangerous ; the friends you have named uncertain ; the time itself unsorted ; and your whole plot too light for the counterpoise of so great an opposition.*

Say you so, say you so ? I say unto you again, you are a shallow cowardly hind, and you lie. What a lack-brain is this ! By the Lord, our plot is a good plot as ever was laid ; our friends true and constant : a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation ; an excellent plot, very good friends. What a frosty-spirited rogue

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

is this ! Why, my Lord of York commends the plot and the general course of the action. 'Zounds ! an I were now by this rascal, I could brain him with his lady's fan. Is there not my father, my uncle, and myself ? Lord Edmund Mortimer, my Lord of York, and Owen Glendower ? Is there not besides the Douglas ? Have I not all their letters to meet me in arms by the ninth of the next month, and are they not some of them set forward already ? What a pagan rascal is this ! an infidel ! Ha ! you shall see now in very sincerity of fear and cold heart, will he to the king and lay open all our proceedings. O ! I could divide myself and go to buffets, for moving such a dish of skim milk with so honourable an action. Hang him ! let him tell the king ; we are prepared. I will set forward to-night.

THE LETTERS

LETTER THIRTY-ONE

TITUS ANDRONICUS. ACT II. SC. iv.

*Murderers' Forgery.*

The “fatal writ, the complot of this timeless tragedy,” which Tamora gives to Saturninus, to implicate Titus’s sons in the murder of Bassianus, brother to Saturninus.

*And if we miss to meet him handsomely,  
Sweet huntsman Bassianus 'tis we mean,  
Do thou so much as dig the grave for him :  
Thou know'st our meaning. Look for thy reward  
Among the nettles at the elder-tree  
Which overshades the mouth of that same pit  
Where we decreed to bury Bassianus :  
Do this, and purchase us thy lasting friends.*

The deceived Saturninus exclaims, after reading the letter :

*O Tamora ! was ever heard the like ?  
This is the pit, and this the elder-tree.  
Look, sirs, if you can find the huntsman out  
That should have murder'd Bassianus here.*

Tamora’s accomplice, Aaron, thereupon makes to find the bag of gold. Meanwhile Tamora’s sons have completed the mutilation of Lavinia, Titus’s daughter, in another part of the forest.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER THIRTY-TWO

KING LEAR. ACT I. Sc. ii.

*Edmund's forgery.*

The full flavour of Edmund's exultant treachery is best brought out by recalling how he induces Gloucester to read the forged letter, and then plays shuttlecock with two trusting minds.

*Gloucester.* Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter ?

*Edmund.* I know no news, my lord.

*Gloucester.* What paper were you reading ?

*Edmund.* Nothing, my lord.

*Gloucester.* No ? What needed then that terrible despatch of it into your pocket ? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see : come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

*Edmund.* I beseech you, Sir, pardon me : it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read ; for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your overlooking.

*Gloucester.* Give me the letter, Sir.

*Edmund.* I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

*Gloucester.* Let's see, let's see.

*Edmund.* I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

## THE LETTERS

*Gloucester.* (*Reads.*) *This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; \* keeps our fortunes from us, till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, Edgar.*—Humph!—Conspiracy!—Sleep till I waked him,—you should enjoy half his revenue,—My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in?—When came this to you? Who brought it?

*Edmund.* It was not brought me, my lord,—there's the cunning of it, I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

*Gloucester.* You know the character to be your brother's?

*Edmund.* If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

*Gloucester.* It is his.

*Edmund.* It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

*Gloucester.* Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

\* *i.e.*, prime of our lives. Cf I., i. of same play “*Goneril*” The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash”

## SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Edmund.* Never, my lord : but I have often heard him maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

*Gloucester.* O villain, villain !—His very opinion in the letter !—Abhorred villain ! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain ! worse than brutish !—Go, sirrah, seek him ; I'll apprehend him :—abominable villain !—Where is he ?

*Edmund.* I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother, till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you shall run a certain course ; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honour, and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

*Gloucester.* Think you so ?

*Edmund.* If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction ; and that without any further delay than this very evening.

*Gloucester.* He cannot be such a monster—

*Edmund.* Nor is not, sure.

*Gloucester.* To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him.—Heaven and earth !—Edmund, seek him out ; wind me into him, I pray you : frame the

## THE LETTERS

business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself, to be in a due resolution.

*Edmund.* I will seek him, Sir, presently ; convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

*Gloucester.* These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us : though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects : love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide : in cities, mutinies ; in countries, discord ; in palaces, treason ; and the bond cracked between son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction ; there's son against father : the king falls from bias of nature ; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time : machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves !—Find out this villain, Edmund ; it shall lose thee nothing ; do it carefully.—And the noble and true-hearted Kent banish'd ! his offence, honesty !—'Tis strange !

[Exit.]

*Edmund.* This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,—often the surfeit of our own behaviour,—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars ; as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence ; and all that we are evil in, by a

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

divine thrusting on : an admirable evasion of whore-master man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star ! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under *ursa major* ; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. 'Sfoot ! I should have been that I am had the maidliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.

Edgar—

(Enter EDGAR.)

and pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy : my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. O, these eclipses do portend these divisions !  
*Fa, sol, la, mi.*

*Edgar.* How now, brother Edmund ! What serious contemplation are you in ?

*Edmund.* I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

*Edgar.* Do you busy yourself with that ?

*Edmund.* I promise you the effects he writes of succeed unhappily ; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent ; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities ; divisions in state ; menaces and maledictions against king and nobles ; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

*Edgar.* How long have you been a sectary astronomical ?

*Edmund.* Come, come ; when saw you my father last ?

THE LETTERS

*Edgar.* The night gone by.

*Edmund.* Spake you with him ?

*Edgar* Ay, two hours together.

*Edmund.* Parted you in good terms ? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance ?

*Edgar.* None at all.

*Edmund.* Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him ; and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

*Edgar.* Some villain hath done me wrong.

*Edmund.* That's my fear. I pray you have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower, and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray you, go ; there's my key. If you do stir abroad, go armed.

*Edgar.* Armed, brother ?

*Edmund.* Brother, I advise you to the best ; go armed ; I am no honest man if there be any good meaning toward you ; I have told you what I have seen and heard ; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it ; pray you, away.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

LETTER THIRTY-THREE

KING LEAR. ACT IV. SC. vi

*Goneril to Edmund.*

The letter which Edgar takes from the dying steward, and so learns that his half-brother is being asked by his mother to murder his father, the Earl of Gloucester.

*Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off : if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror : then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail ; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.*

*Your wife, (so I would say,) and*

*your affectionate servant,*

*Goneril.*

THE LETTERS

LETTER THIRTY-FOUR

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. ACT IV. Sc. iii.  
*Parolles to Diana.*

Bertram, Count Rousillon, is not a little annoyed when Parolles, "undone by a plot," is searched and the following "sonnet" to Diana, the Florentine Miss whom Bertram was pursuing, is read out :

*Dian, the count's a fool, and full of gold—  
When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it ;  
After he scores, he never pays the score :  
\*Half won is match well made ; match, and well make it ;  
He ne'er pays after-debts ; take it before,  
And say a soldier, Dian, told thee thus,  
†Men are to mell with, boys are not to kiss ;  
For count of this, the count's a fool, I know it,  
Who pays before, but not when he does owe it.  
Thine, as he vow'd to thee in thine ear,*

*Parolles.*

The first mootling of the plot which undid Parolles is in a pretty passage of Shakespeare's swift and easy prose. It occurs in Sc. vi of Act III.

\* A match made in business-like fashion is half won, so when you match, see that all is well arranged.

† "Mell" (often used in the sense of "meddling") is here used as a similar term to "Kiss," the emphasis being on the antithesis of *men* and *boys*. Bertram's indignation ("He shall be whipped through the army with this rhyme in's forehead") is understandable !

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

*Camp before Florence.*

(Enter BERTRAM and the two French Lords.)

*First Lord.* Nay, good my lord, put him to't ; let him have his way.

*Second Lord.* If your lordship find him not a hilding, hold me no more in your respect.

*First Lord.* On my life, my lord, a bubble.

*Bertram.* Do you think I am so far deceived in him ?

*First Lord.* Believe it, my lord, in mine own direct knowledge, without any malice, but to speak of him as my kinsman, he's a most notable coward, an infinite and endless liar, an hourly promise-breaker, the owner of no one good quality worthy your lordship's entertainment.

*Second Lord.* It were fit you knew him ; lest, reposing too far in his virtue, which he hath not, he might, at some great and trusty business, in a main danger, fail you.

*Bertram.* I would I knew in what particular action to try him.

*Second Lord.* None better than to let him fetch off his drum, which you hear him so confidently undertake to do.

*First Lord.* I, with a troop of Florentines, will suddenly surprise him ; such I will have, whom, I am sure, he knows not from the enemy : we will bind and hoodwink him so, that he shall suppose no other but that he is carried into the leaguer of the adversaries, when we bring him to our tents. Be but your lordship

#### THE LETTERS

present at his examination ; if he do not, for the promise of his life, and in the highest compulsion of base fear, offer to betray you, and deliver all the intelligence in his power against you, and that with the divine forfeit of his soul upon oath, never trust my judgment in anything.

*Second Lord.* O, for the love of laughter, let him fetch his drum ; he says he has a stratagem for't : when your lordship sees the bottom of his success in 't, and to what metal this counterfeit lump of ore will be melted, if you give him not John Drum's entertainment, your inclining cannot be removed. Here he comes.



## PART III

### PHILOSOPHIES AND TWO EPILOGUES IN SHAKESPEARE'S PROSE

ONE—LAUNCELOT GOBBO'S CONSCIENCE  
(*The Merchant of Venice*, II, i)

TWO—LAUNCE AND HIS DOG  
(*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II, iii and V, i)

THREE—BOTTOM'S DREAM  
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV, i)

FOUR—SHYLOCK ON JEW AND CHRISTIAN  
(*The Merchant of Venice*, I, iii; III, ii)

FIVE—GRAVEYARD WISDOM  
(*Hamlet*, V, 1)

SIX—THE COMMON SOLDIER'S MIND  
(*King Henry the Fifth*, IV, i)

SEVEN—IAGO'S COUNSEL  
(*Othello*, I, iii; II, i; II, iii)

EIGHT—AUTOLICUS ON HONESTY  
(*A Winter's Tale*, IV, iii)

NINE—BENEDICK ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE  
(*Much Ado About Nothing*, II, iii and V, iv)

TEN—A WOMAN'S POINTS  
(*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III, ii)

ELEVEN—THE POINTS OF A HORSE  
(King Henry the Fifth, III, vi)

TWELVE—FALSTAFF FORSWEARS THIN POTATIONS  
(2 King Henry the Fourth, IV, iii)

THIRTEEN—MACEDON AND MONMOUTH  
(King Henry the Fifth, IV, vii)

FOURTEEN—THE ART OF QUARRELLING  
(As You Like It, V, iv)

FIFTEEN—THE PEDAGOGUE AND THE GALLANT  
(Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii)

SIXTEEN—A LESSON IN ENGLISH  
(King Henry the Fifth, III, iv)

SEVENTEEN—ANOTHER LESSON IN ENGLISH  
(King Henry the Fifth, V, ii)

EIGHTEEN—TWO EPILOGUES

## PHILOSOPHIES

## PHILOSOPHIES

ONE

MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT II. Sc. i.

*Launcelot Gobbo's Conscience.*

Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow, and tempts me, saying to me, “Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,” or “good Gobbo,” or “good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away.” My conscience says, “No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo;” or, as aforesaid, “honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels.” Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: “*Via!*” says the fiend; “away!” says the fiend; “for the heavens, rouse up a brave mind,” says the fiend, “and run.” Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, “My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man’s son,—or rather an honest woman’s son;—for, indeed, my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste;—well, my conscience says, “Launcelot, budge not.” “Budge,” says the fiend. “Budge not,” says my conscience. “Conscience,” say I, “you counsel well;” “fiend,” say I, “you counsel well:” to be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark! is a kind

### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

of devil ; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly, the Jew is the very devil incarnal ; and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel : I will run, fiend ; my heels are at your commandment ; I will run.

PHILOSOPHIES

TWO

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA. ACT II. Sc. iii.

*Launce and his Dog.*

Nay, 'twill be this hour ere I have done weeping ; all the kind of the Launces have this very fault : I have received my proportion, like the prodigious son, and am going with Sir Proteus to the Imperial's court. I think, Crab my dog be the sourest-natured dog that lives : my mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in a great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear . he is a stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog ; a Jew would have wept to have seen our parting : why, my grandam, having no eyes, look you, wept herself blind at my parting. Nay, I'll show you the manner of it. This shoe is my father ; no, this left shoe is my father : no, no, this left shoe is my mother ; nay, that cannot be so neither :—yes, it is so ; it is so ; it hath the worser sole. This shoe, with the hole in, is my mother, and this my father. A vengeance on 't ! there 'tis : now, sir, this staff is my sister ; for, look you, she is as white as a lily and as small as a wand : this hat is Nan, our maid : I am the dog ; no, the dog is himself, and I am the dog,—O ! the dog is me, and I am myself . ay, so, so. Now come I to my father ; “ Father, your blessing ; ” now should not the shoe

### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

speak a word for weeping : now should I kiss my father ; well, he weeps on. Now come I to my mother ;—O, that she could speak now like a wood woman ! Well, I kiss her ; why, there 'tis ; here's my mother's breath up and down. Now come I to my sister ; mark the moan she makes : Now the dog all this while sheds not a tear nor speaks a word ; but see how I lay the dust with my tears.

When a man's servant shall play the cur with him, look you, it goes hard ; one that I brought up of a puppy ; one that I saved from drowning, when three or four of his blind brothers and sisters went to it. I have taught him, even as one would say precisely, " Thus would I teach a dog." I was sent to deliver him as a present to Mistress Silvia from my master, and I came no sooner into the dining-chamber but he steps me to her trencher and steals her capon's leg. O ! 'tis a foul thing when a cur cannot keep himself in all companies. I would have, as one should say, one that takes upon him to be a dog indeed, to be, as it were, a dog at all things. If I had not had more wit than he, to take a fault upon me that he did, I think verily he had been hanged for 't : sure as I live, he had suffered for 't : you shall judge. He thrusts me himself into the company of three or four gentleman-like dogs under the duke's table : he had not been there—bless the mark—a pissing-while, but all the chamber smelt him. " Out with the dog !" says one ; " What

### PHILOSOPHIES

cur is that?" says another; "Whip him out," says the third; "Hang him up," says the duke. I, having been acquainted with the smell before, knew it was Crab, and goes me to the fellow that whips the dogs: "Friend," quoth I, "you mean to whip the dog?" "Ay, marry, do I," quoth he. "You do him the more wrong," quoth I; "'twas I did the thing you wot of." He makes me no more ado, but whips me out of the chamber. How many masters would do this for his servant? Nay, I'll be sworn, I have sat in the stocks for puddings he hath stolen, otherwise he had been executed; I have stood on the pillory for geese he hath killed, otherwise he had suffered for 't; thou thinkest not of this now. Nay, I remember the trick you served me when I took my leave of Madam Silvia: did not I bid thee still mark me and do as I do? When didst thou see me heave up my leg and make water against a gentlewoman's farthingale? Didst thou ever see me do such a trick?

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

THREE

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. ACT IV. SC. i.  
*Bottom's ineffable Dream.*

When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer —  
my next is, “ Most fair Pyramus.”—Hey, ho !—Peter  
Quince ! Flute, the bellows-mender ! Snout, the  
tinker ! Starveling ! God’s my life ; stolen hence,  
and left me asleep ! I have had a most rare vision. I  
have had a dream,—past the wit of man to say what  
dream it was : man is but an ass, if he go about to  
expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no  
man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought  
I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to  
say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not  
heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not  
able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to  
report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince  
to write a ballad of this dream : it shall be called  
Bottom’s dream, because it hath no bottom ; and I will  
sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke :  
peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing  
it at her death.

PHILOSOPHIES

FOUR

MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT I. SC. III.

*Shylock on Jew and Christian*

My meaning, in saying he is a good man, is to have you understand me, that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition. he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies ; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England,—and other ventures he hath squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men : there be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves ; I mean pirates ; and then, there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient ;—three thousand ducats ; —I think I may take his bond. . . .

I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following ; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

MERCHANT OF VENICE. ACT III. SC. ii.

*Shylock.* There I have another bad match : a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce shew his head on the Rialto ;—a beggar, that used to come so smug upon the mart ;—let him look to his bond : he was wont to call me usurer ;—let him look to his bond : he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy ;—let him look to his bond.

*Salarino.* Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh ; what's that good for ?

*Shylock.* To bait fish withal : if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me of half a million ; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies ; and what's his reason ? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes ? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions ? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is ? if you prick us, do we not bleed ? if you tickle us, do we not laugh ? if you poison us, do we not die ? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge ? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility ? revenge : if a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be

PHILOSOPHIES

by Christian example? why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

FIVE

HAMLET. ACT V. SC. i.

*Graveyard Wisdom.*

(*Two Clowns, with spades and mattock.*)

*First Clown.* Is she to be buried in Christian burial  
that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

*Second Clown.* I tell thee she is; and therefore  
make her grave straight: the crowner hath sat on her,  
and finds it Christian burial.

*First Clown.* How can that be, unless she drowned  
herself in her own defence?

*Second Clown.* Why, 'tis found so.

*First Clown* It must be *se offendendo*; it cannot  
be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself  
wittingly it argues an act; and an act hath three  
branches; it is, to act, to do, and to perform: argal,  
she drowned herself wittingly.

*Second Clown.* Nay, but hear you, goodman  
delver,—

*First Clown.* Give me leave. Here lies the water;  
good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to  
this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he,  
he goes; mark you that? but if the water come to him,  
and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that  
is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

*Second Clown.* But is this law?

*First Clown.* Ay, marry, is 't; crowner's quest law.

*Second Clown.* Will you ha' the truth on 't? If

## PHILOSOPHIES

this had not been a gentlewoman she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

*First Clown.* Why, there thou sayest ; and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers ; they hold up Adam's profession.

*Second Clown.* Was he a gentleman ?

*First Clown.* A' was the first that ever bore arms.

*Second Clown.* Why, he had none.

*First Clown.* What ! art a heathen ? How dost thou understand the Scripture ? The Scripture says, Adam digged ; could he dig without arms ? I'll put another question to thee ; if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

*Second Clown.* Go to.

*First Clown.* What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter ?

*Second Clown.* The gallows-maker ; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

*First Clown.* I like thy wit well, in good faith ; the gallows does well, but how does it well ? it does well to those that do ill ; now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church : argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again ; come.

*Second Clown.* Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter ?

*First Clown.* Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*Second Clown.* Marry, now I can tell.

*First Clown.* To 't.

*Second Clown.* Mass, I cannot tell.

(Enter HAMLET and HORATIO at a distance.)

*First Clown.* Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating ; and, when you are asked this question next, say, "a grave-maker :" the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan ; fetch me a stoup of liquor. [Exit Second Clown.]

(First Clown digs and sings.)

In youth, when I did love, did love,

Methought it was very sweet,

To contract, O ! the time, for-a my behove,

O ! methought there was nothing meet.

*Hamlet.* Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making ?

*Horatio.* Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

*Hamlet.* 'Tis e'en so ; the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

*First Clown.*

But age, with his stealing steps,

Hath claw'd me in his clutch,

And hath shipped me intil the land,

As if I had never been such.

[Throws up a skull.]

*Hamlet.* That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once ; how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it

## PHILOSOPHIES

were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder ! This might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'er-offices, one that would circumvent God, might it not ?

*Horatio.* It might, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Or of a courtier, which could say, " Good morrow, sweet lord ! How dost thou, good lord ? " This might be my Lord Such-a-one, that praised my Lord Such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it, might it not ?

*Horatio.* Ay, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Why, e'en so, and now my Lady Worm's ; chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em ? mine ache to think on 't.

*First Clown.*

A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,  
For and a shrouding sheet ;  
O ! a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up another skull.*

*Hamlet.* There's another ; why may not that be the skull of a lawyer ? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks ? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery ? Hum ! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes,

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries ; is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt ? will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures ? The very conveyance of his lands will hardly lie in this box, and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha ?

*Horatio.* Not a jot more, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Is not a parchment made of sheep-skins ?

*Horatio.* Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

*Hamlet.* They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sir ?

*First Clown.* Mine, sir,

O ! a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

*Hamlet.* I think it bethine, indeed ; for thou liest in't.

*First Clown.* You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours ; for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

*Hamlet.* Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine : 'tis for the dead, not for the quick ; therefore thou liest.

*First Clown.* 'Tis a quick lie, sir ; 'twill away again, from me to you.

*Hamlet.* What man dost thou dig it for ?

*First Clown.* For no man, sir.

*Hamlet.* What woman, then ?

## PHILOSOPHIES

*First Clown.* For none, neither.

*Hamlet.* Who is to be buried in 't?

*First Clown.* One that was a woman, sir ; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

*Hamlet* How absolute the knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker ?

*First Clown.* Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

*Hamlet.* How long is that since ?

*First Clown.* Cannot you tell that ? every fool can tell that ; it was the very day that young Hamlet was born ; he that is mad, and sent into England.

*Hamlet.* Ay, marry ; why was he sent into England ?

*First Clown* Why, because he was mad : he shall recover his wits there ; or, if he do not, 'tis no great matter there.

*Hamlet.* Why ?

*First Clown.* 'Twill not be seen in him there ; there the men are as mad as he.

*Hamlet.* How came he mad ?

*First Clown.* Very strangely, they say.

*Hamlet.* How strangely ?

*First Clown.* Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

*Hamlet.* Upon what ground ?

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*First Clown.* Why, here in Denmark ; I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

*Hamlet.* How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot ?

*First Clown.* Faith, if he be not rotten before he die,—as we have many pocky corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in,—he will last you some eight year or nine year ; a tanner will last you nine year.

*Hamlet.* Why he more than another ?

*First Clown.* Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that he will keep out water a great while, and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull now ; this skull hath lain you i' the earth three-and-twenty years.

*Hamlet.* Whose was it ?

*First Clown.* A whoreson mad fellow's it was : whose do you think it was ?

*Hamlet.* Nay, I know not.

*First Clown.* A pestilence on him for a mad rogue ! a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

*Hamlet.* This !

*First Clown.* E'en that.

*Hamlet.* Let me see.—(*Takes the skull.*)—Alas ! poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio ; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy ; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is ! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not

## PHILOSOPHIES

how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that.—Pr'ythee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

*Horatio.* What's that, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

*Horatio.* E'en so.

*Hamlet.* And smelt so? pah!

[*Throws down the skull.*]

*Horatio.* E'en so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till we find it stopping a bung-hole?

*Horatio.* 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

*Hamlet.* No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus; Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:

O, that the earth, which kept the world in awe,

Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!—

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

SIX

KING HENRY THE FIFTH. ACT IV. Sc. i.

*The Common Soldier's Mind.*

The English Camp at Agincourt. The King, unrecognised, learns the mind of his soldiers.

(Enter PISTOL.)

*Pistol.* *Qui va là ?*

*King Henry.* A friend.

*Pistol.* Discuss unto me : are thou officer ?

Or art thou base, common, and popular ?

*King Henry.* I am a gentleman of a company.

*Pistol.* Trailest thou the puissant pike ?

*King Henry.* Even so. What are you ?

*Pistol.* As good a gentleman as the emperor.

*King Henry.* Then you are a better than the king.

*Pistol.* The king's a bawcock, and a heart of gold,  
A lad of life, an imp of fame ;

Of parents good, of fist most valiant :

I kiss his dirty shoe, and from my heart-strings

I love the lovely bully. What's thy name ?

*King Henry.* Harry *le Roy*.

*Pistol.* *Le Roy !* a Cornish name : art thou of  
Cornish crew ?

*King Henry.* No, I am a Welshman.

*Pistol.* Knowest thou Fluellen ?

*King Henry.* Yes.

## PHILOSOPHIES

*Pistol.* Tell him, I'll knock his leek about his pate,  
Upon Saint Davy's day.

*King Henry.* Do not you wear your dagger in  
your cap that day, lest he knock that about yours.

*Pistol.* Art thou his friend ?

*King Henry.* And his kinsman too.

*Pistol.* The figo for thee then !

*King Henry.* I thank you . God be with you !

*Pistol.* My name is Pistol call'd. [Exit.

*King Henry.* It sorts well with your fierceness.

(Enter FLUELLEN and GOWER, severally.)

*Gower.* Captain Fluellen !

*Fluellen.* So ! in the name of Cheshu Christ, speak lower. It is the greatest admiration in the universal 'orld, when the true and auncient prerogatifes and laws of the wars is not kept. If you would take the pains but to examine the wars of Pompey the Great, you shall find, I warrant you, that there is no tiddle-taddle nor pibble-pabble in Pompey's camp ; I warrant you, you shall find the ceremonies of the wars, and the cares of it, and the forms of it, and the sobriety of it, and the modesty of it, to be otherwise.

*Gower.* Why, the enemy is loud ; you heard him all night.

*Fluellen.* If the enemy is an ass and a fool and a prating coxcomb, is it meet, think you, that we should also, look you, be an ass and a fool and a prating coxcomb, in your own conscience now ?

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*Gower.* I will speak lower.

*Fluellen.* I pray you and peseech you that you will.

[*Exeunt GOWER and FLUELLEN.*]

*King Henry.* Though it appear a little out of fashion,

There is much care and valour in this Welshman.

(Enter JOHN BATES, ALEXANDER COURT, and MICHAEL WILLIAMS.)

*Court.* Brother John Bates, is not that the morning which breaks yonder ?

*Bates.* I think it be ; but we have no great cause to desire the approach of day.

*Williams.* We see yonder the beginning of the day, but I think we shall never see the end of it. Who goes there ?

*King Henry.* A friend.

*Williams.* Under what captain serve you ?

*King Henry.* Under Sir Thomas Erpingham.

*Williams.* A good old commander and a most kind gentleman : I pray you, what thinks he of our estate ?

*King Henry.* Even as men wracked upon a sand, that look to be washed off the next tide.

*Bates.* He hath not told his thought to the king ?

*King Henry.* No ; nor it is not meet he should. For, though I speak it to you, I think the king is but a man, as I am . the violet smells to him as it doth to me ; the element shows to him as it doth to me ; all his senses have but human conditions : his ceremonies

## PHILOSOPHIES

laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man ; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore when he sees reason of fears, as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are : yet, in reason, no man should possess him with any appearance of fear, lest he, by showing it, should dishearten his army.

*Bates.* He may show what outward courage he will, but I believe, as cold a night as 'tis, he could wish himself in Thames up to the neck, and so I would he were, and I by him, at all adventures, so we were quit here.

*King Henry.* By my troth, I will speak my conscience of the king : I think he would not wish himself any where but where he is.

*Bates.* Then I would he were here alone ; so should he be sure to be ransomed, and a many poor men's lives saved.

*King Henry.* I dare say you love him not so ill to wish him here alone, howsoever you speak this to feel other men's minds. Methinks I could not die any where so contented as in the king's company, his cause being just and his quarrel honourable.

*Williams.* That's more than we know.

*Bates.* Ay, or more than we should seek after ; for we know enough if we know we are the king's subjects. If his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us.

#### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*Williams.* But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make ; when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day, and cry all, “ We died at such a place ” ; some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afear'd there are few die well that die in a battle ; for how can they charitably dispose of any thing when blood is their argument ? Now, if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the king that led them to it, whom to disobey were against all proportion of subjection.

*King Henry.* So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule<sup>6</sup>, should be imposed upon his father that sent him : or if a servant, under his master’s command transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers and die in many irreconciled iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant’s damnation. But this is not so : the king is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant ; for they purpose not their death when they purpose their services. Besides, there is no king, be his cause never so spotless, if it come to the arbitrement of swords, can try it out with all unspotted soldiers. Some, peradventure, have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived murder ;

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some, of beguiling virgins with the broken seals of perjury ; some, making the wars their bulwark, that have before gored the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery. Now, if these men have defeated the law and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God : war is his beadle, war is his vengeance ; so that here men are punished for before-breach of the king's laws in now the king's quarrel : where they feared the death they have borne life away, and where they would be safe they perish. Then, if they die unprovided, no more is the king guilty of their damnation than he was before guilty of those impieties for the which they are now visited. Every subject's duty is the king's ; but every subject's soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience ; and dying so, death is to him advantage ; or not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained : and in him that escapes, it were not sin to think, that making God so free an offer, he let him outlive that day to see his greatness, and to teach others how they should prepare.

*Williams.* 'Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his own head : the king is not to answer it.

*Bates.* I do not desire he should answer for me ; and yet I determine to fight lustily for him.

*King Henry.* I myself heard the king say he would not be ransomed.

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*Williams.* Ay, he said so, to make us fight cheerfully; but when our throats are cut he may be ransomed, and we ne'er the wiser.

*King Henry.* If I live to see it, I will never trust his word after.

*Williams.* You pay him then. That's a perilous shot out of an elder-gun, that a poor and a private displeasure can do against a monarch. You may as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a peacock's feather. You'll never trust his word after! come, 'tis a foolish saying.

*King Henry.* Your reproof is something too round; I should be angry with you if the time were convenient.

*Williams.* Let it be a quarrel between us, if you live.

*King Henry.* I embrace it.

*Williams.* How shall I know thee again?

*King Henry.* Give me any gage of thine, and I will wear it in my bonnet: then, if ever thou darest acknowledge it, I will make it my quarrel.

*Williams.* Here's my glove: give me another of thine.

*King Henry.* There.

*Williams.* This will I also wear in my cap: if ever thou come to me and say after to-morrow, "This is my glove," by this hand I will take thee a box on the ear.

*King Henry.* If ever I live to see it, I will challenge it.

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*Williams.* Thou darest as well be hanged.

*King Henry.* Well, I will do it, though I take thee in the king's company.

*Williams.* Keep thy word : fare thee well.

*Bates.* Be friends, you English fools, be friends : we have French quarrels enow, if you could tell how to reckon.

*King Henry.* Indeed, the French may lay twenty French crowns to one, they will beat us ; for they bear them on their shoulders : but it is no English treason to cut French crowns, and to-morrow the king himself will be a clipper.

[*Exeunt SOLDIERS.*]

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OTHELLO. ACT I, SC. iii; ACT II, SCGS. 1 AND iii.  
*Iago's Counsel.\**

*Iago.* O ! villanous ; I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say, I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

*Roderigo.* What should I do ? I confess it is my shame to be so fond ; but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

*Iago.* Virtue ! a fig ! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners ; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions ; but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted

\*Note the euphuistic style, incorporated in Shakespeare's more artistic prose, but evident throughout.

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lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion. . . It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will. Come, be a man. Drown thyself! drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness; I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse; follow these wars; defeat thy favour with a usurped beard; I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor,—put money in thy purse,—nor he his to her. It was a violent commencement in her, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration; put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills;—fill thy purse with money:—the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice. She must have change, she must: therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst. If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! it is clean out of the way: seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her. . . Go, make money. I have told thee often,

### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

and I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor : my cause is hearted : thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him ; if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse ; go : provide thy money. We will have more of this to-morrow . . . Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies , and will she love him still for prating ? let not thy discreet heart think it. Her eye must be fed ; and what delight shall she have to look on the devil ? When the blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it, and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties ; all which the Moor is defective in. Now, for want of these required conveniences, her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to heave the gorge, disrelish and abhor the Moor ; very nature will instruct her in it, and compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, this granted, as it is a most pregnant and unforced position, who stands so eminently in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does ? a knave very voluble, no further consonable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection ? why, none ; why, none : a slipper and subtle knave, a finder-out of occasions, that has an eye can stamp and

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counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never present itself ; a devilish knave ! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after , a pestilent complete knave ! and the woman hath found him already.

*Roderigo.* I cannot believe that in her ; she is full of most blessed condition.

*Iago.* Blessed fig's end ! the wine she drinks is made of grapes ; if she had been blessed she would never have loved the Moor ; blessed pudding ! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand ? didst not mark that ?

*Roderigo.* Yes, that I did ; but that was but courtesy.

*Iago.* Lechery, by this hand ! an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips, that their breaths embraced together. Villanous thoughts, Roderigo ! when these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, the in-corporate conclusion. Pish ! But, sir, be you ruled by me : I have brought you from Venice. Watch you to-night ; for the command, I'll lay 't upon you : Cassio knows you not. I'll not be far from you : do you find some occasion to anger Cassio, either by speaking too loud, or tainting his discipline ; or from what other course you please, which the time shall more favourably minister.

*Roderigo.* Well.

### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*Iago.* Sir, he is rash, and very sudden in choler ; and, haply, with his truncheon may strike at you : provoke him, that he may ; for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny ; whose qualification shall come into no true taste again, but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires, by the means I shall then have to prefer them ; and the impediment most profitably removed, without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity.

\* \* \*

*Iago.* What, are you hurt, lieutenant ?

*Cassio.* Ay, past all surgery.

*Iago.* Marry, heaven forbid !

*Cassio* Reputation, reputation, reputation ! O, I have lost my reputation ! I have lost the immortal part, Sir, of myself, and what remains is bestial.—My reputation, Iago, my reputation !

*Iago.* As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily wound ; there is more offence in that than in reputation Reputation is an idle and most false imposition ; oft got without merit, and lost without deserving : you have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a loser. What ! man ; there are ways to recover the general again ; you are but now cast in his mood, a punishment more in policy than in malice ; even so as one would beat his offenceless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to him again, and he is yours.

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*Cassio.* I will rather sue to be despised than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer. Drunk ! and speak parrot ! and squabble, swagger, swear, and discourse fustian with one's own shadow ! O thou invisible spirit of wine ! if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil !

*Iago.* What was he that you followed with your sword ? What had he done to you ?

*Cassio.* I know not.

*Iago.* Is 't possible ?

*Cassio.* I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly ; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore. O God ! that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains ; that we should, with joy, pleasure, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts.

*Iago.* Why, but you are now well enough ; how came you thus recovered ?

*Cassio.* It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath ; one unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself.

*Iago.* Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stands, I could heartily wish this had not befallen, but since it is as it is, mend it for your own good.

*Cassio.* I will ask him for my place again ; he shall tell me I am a drunkard ! Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a

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beast ! O strange ! Every inordinate cup is unblessed and the ingredient is a devil.

*Iago.* Come, come ; good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used ; exclaim no more against it. And, good lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

*Cassio.* I have well approved it, sir. I drunk !

*Iago.* You or any man living may be drunk at some time, man. I'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general : I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces : confess yourself freely to her ; importune her ; she'll help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter ; and my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before.

*Cassio.* You advise me well.

*Iago.* I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

*Cassio.* I think it freely ; and betimes in the morning I will beseech the virtuous Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of my fortunes if they check me here.

*Iago.* You are in the right. Good night, lieutenant ; I must do the watch.

*Cassio.* Good night, honest Iago !

[*Exit.*]

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EIGHT

WINTER'S TALE. ACT IV. Sc. iii.

*Autolycus on Honesty.*

(Enter AUTOLYCUS.)

*Autolycus.* Ha, ha ! what a fool Honesty is ! and Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman ! I have sold all my trumpery : not a counterfeit stone, not a riband, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, horn-ring, to keep my pack from fasting : they throng who should buy first, as if my trinkets had been hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer : by which means I saw whose purse was best in picture ; and what I saw, to my good use I remembered. My clown,—who wants but something to be a reasonable man,—grew so in love with the wenches' song that he would not stir his pettitoes till he had both tune and words ; which so drew the rest of the herd to me that all their other senses stuck in ears : you might have pinched a placket, it was senseless ; 'twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a purse ; I would have filed keys off that hung in chains : no hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it ; so that, in this time of lethargy I picked and cut most of their festival purses ; and had not the old man come in with a whoo-bub against his daughter and the king's son, and scared my choughs from the chaff, I had not left a purse alive in the whole army. . . .

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I understand the business ; I hear it. To have an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand, is necessary for a cut-purse : a good nose is requisite also, to smell out work for the other senses. I see this is the time that the unjust man doth thrive. What an exchange had this been without boot ! what a boot is here with this exchange ! Sure, the gods do this year connive at us, and we may do anything extempore. The prince himself is about a piece of iniquity ; stealing away from his father with his clog at his heels. If I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the king withal, I would not do 't : I hold it the more knavery to conceal it, and therein am I constant to my profession. Aside, aside . here is more matter for a hot brain. Every lane's end, every shop, church, session, hanging, yields a careful man work.

If I had a mind to be honest I see Fortune would not suffer me : she drops booties in my mouth. I am courted now with a double occasion, gold, and a means to do the prince my master good ; which who knows how that may turn back to my advancement ? I will bring these two moles, these blind ones, aboard him : if he think it fit to shore them again, and that the complaint they have to the king concerns him nothing, let him call me rogue for being so far officious ; for I am proof against that title and what shame else belongs to 't. To him will I present them . there may be matter in it. [Exit.

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NINE

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. ACT II. Sc. iii.

*Benedick on Love and Marriage.*

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love : and such a man is Claudio. I have known, when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife ; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe : I have known, when he would have walked ten mile afoot to see a good armour ; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier ; and now is he turned orthographer ; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted, and see with these eyes ? I cannot tell ; I think not : I will not be sworn but love may transform me to an oyster ; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair, yet I am well ; another is wise, yet I am well ; another virtuous, yet I am well ; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain ; wise, or I'll none ; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her ; fair, or I'll never look on her ; mild, or come not near me ; noble, or not I for an angel ; of

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good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Ha! the prince and Monsieur Love ! I will hide me in the arbour.

\* \* \*

This can be no trick ; the conference was sadly borne.—They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady ; it seems, her affections have their full bent. Love me ! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured : they say, I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her ; they say too, that she will rather die than give any sign of affection.—I did never think to marry :—I must not seem proud.—Happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say, the lady is fair ; 'tis a truth I can bear them witness : and virtuous ;—'tis so, I cannot reprove it ; and wise but for loving me :—by my troth, it is no addition to her wit ;—nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her.—I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage. But doth not the appetite alter ? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age : shall quips and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain, awe a man from the career of his humour ? No : the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.—Here comes Beatrice : by this day, she's a fair lady : I do spy some marks of love in her.

PHILOSOPHIES

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. ACT V. SC. iv.

*Benedick on Love and Marriage, still.*

*Don Pedro.* How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

*Benedick.* I'll tell thee what, prince; a college of witcrackers cannot flout me out of my humour. Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram? No; if a man will be beaten with brains, a' shall wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it, for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion. For my part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee; but, in that thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised, and love my cousin.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

TEN

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA. ACT III. Sc. ii.  
*A Woman's Points.*

*Launce.* I am but a fool, look you ; and yet I have the wit to think my master is a kind of a knave : but that's all one, if he be but one knave. He lives not now that knows me to be in love : yet I am in love ; but a team of horse shall not pluck that from me, nor who 'tis I love ; and yet 'tis a woman ; but what woman, I will not tell myself ; and yet 'tis a milkmaid ; yet 'tis not a maid, for she hath had gossips ; yet 'tis a maid, for she is her master's maid, and serves for wages. She hath more qualities than a water-spaniel,—which is much in a bare Christian. (*Pulling out a paper.*) Here is the catalog of her condition. *Imprimis, She can fetch and carry.* Why, a horse can do no more : nay, a horse cannot fetch, but only carry ; therefore, is she better than a jade. *Item, She can milk* ; look you, a sweet virtue in a maid with clean hands.

(Enter SPEED.)

*Speed.* How now, Signior Launce ! what news with your mastership ?

*Launce.* With my master's ship ? why, it is at sea.

*Speed.* Well, your old vice still ; mistake the word. What news, then, in your paper ?

*Launce.* The blackest news that ever thou heardest

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*Speed.* Why, man, how black?

*Launce.* Why, as black as ink.

*Speed.* Let me read them.

*Launce.* Fie on thee, jolthead ! thou canst not read.

*Speed.* Thou liest ; I can.

*Launce.* I will try thee. Tell me this : who begot thee ?

*Speed.* Marry, the son of my grandfather.

*Launce.* O, illiterate loiterer ! it was the son of thy grandmother. This proves that thou canst not read.

*Speed.* Come, fool, come : try me in thy paper.

*Launce.* There ; and Saint Nicholas be thy speed !

*Speed.* *Imprimis, She can milk.*

*Launce* Ay, that she can.

*Speed.* *Item, She brews good ale.*

*Launce.* And thereof comes the proverb, “ Blessing of your heart, you brew good ale.”

*Speed.* *Item, She can sew.*

*Launce.* That’s as much as to say, Can she so ?

*Speed.* *Item, She can knit.*

*Launce.* What need a man care for a stock with a wench, when she can knit him a stock ?

*Speed.* *Item, She can wash and scour.*

*Launce.* A special virtue ; for then she need not be washed and scoured.

*Speed.* *Item, She can spin.*

*Launce.* Then may I set the world on wheels, when she can spin for her living.

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*Speed.* Item, *She hath many nameless virtues.*

*Launce.* That's as much as to say, bastard virtues ; that, indeed, know not their fathers, and therefore have no names.

*Speed.* Here follow her vices.

*Launce.* Close at the heels of her virtues.

*Speed.* Item, *She is not to be kissed fasting, in respect of her breath.*

*Launce.* Well, that fault may be mended with a breakfast. Read on.

*Speed.* Item, *She hath a sweet mouth.*

*Launce.* That makes amends for her sour breath.

*Speed.* Item, *She doth talk in her sleep.*

*Launce.* It's no matter for that, so she sleep not in her talk.

*Speed.* Item, *She is slow in words.*

*Launce.* O villain, that set this down among her vices ! To be slow in words is a woman's only virtue : I pray thee, out with 't, and place it for her chief virtue.

*Speed.* Item, *She is proud.*

*Launce.* Out with that too : it was Eve's legacy, and cannot be ta'en from her.

*Speed.* Item, *She hath no teeth.*

*Launce.* I care not for that neither, because I love crusts.

*Speed.* Item, *She is curst.*

*Launce.* Well ; the best is, she hath no teeth to bite.

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*Speed. Item, She will often praise her liquor.*

*Launce. If her liquor be good, she shall : if she will not, I will ; for good things should be praised.*

*Speed. Item, She is too liberal.*

*Launce. Of her tongue she cannot, for that's writ down she is slow of : of her purse she shall not, for that I'll keep shut : now, of another thing she may, and that cannot I help. Well, proceed.*

*Speed. Item, She hath more hair than wit, and more faults than hairs, and more wealth than faults.*

*Launce. Stop there ; I'll have her : she was mine, and not mine, twice or thrice in that last article. Rehearse that once more.*

*Speed. Item, She hath more hair than wit.—*

*Launce. More hair than wit it may be ; I'll prove it : the cover of the salt hides the salt, and therefore it is more than the salt ; the hair, that covers the wit is more than the wit, for the greater hides the less. What's next ?*

*Speed. And more faults than hairs.—*

*Launce. That's monstrous ! O, that that were out !*

*Speed. And more wealth than faults.*

*Launce. Why, that word makes the faults gracious. Well, I'll have her ; and if it be a match, as nothing is impossible,—*

*Speed. What then ?*

*Launce. Why, then will I tell thee,—that thy master stays for thee at the North-gate.*

*Speed. For me ?*

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*Launce.* For thee ! ay ; who art thou ? he hath stayed for a better man than thee.

*Speed.* And must I go to him ?

*Launce.* Thou must run to him, for thou hast stayed so long that going will scarce serve the turn.

*Speed.* Why didst not tell me sooner ? pox of your love-letters !

[*Exit.*]

*Launce.* Now will he be swing'd for reading my letter. An unmannerly slave, that will thrust himself into secrets. I'll after, to rejoice in the boy's correction.

[*Exit.*]

PHILOSOPHIES

ELEVEN

KING HENRY THE FIFTH. ACT III. SC. vi.

*The Points of a Horse.*

*The French Camp, near Agincourt.*

(*The CONSTABLE OF FRANCE, the LORD RAMBURES, the DUKE OF ORLEANS, the DAUPHIN, and Others.*)

*Constable.* Tut ! I have the best armour of the world. Would it were day !

*Orleans.* You have an excellent armour ; but let my horse have his due.

*Constable.* It is the best horse of Europe.

*Orleans.* Will it never be morning ?

*Dauphin.* My Lord of Orleans, and my lord high constable, you talk of horse and armour—

*Orleans.* You are as well provided of both as any prince in the world.

*Dauphin.* What a long night is this ! I will not change my horse with any that treads but on four pasterns. *Ca, ha !* He bounds from the earth as if his entrails were hairs : *le cheval volant*, the Pegasus, *qui a les narines de feu !* When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk : he trots the air ; the earth sings when he touches it ; the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes.

*Orleans.* He's of the colour of the nutmeg.

*Dauphin.* And of the heat of the ginger. It is a beast for Perseus : he is pure air and fire ; and the

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dull elements of earth and water never appear in him but only in patient stillness while his rider mounts him : he is indeed a horse ; and all other jades you may call beasts.

*Constable.* Indeed, my lord, it is a most absolute and excellent horse.

*Dauphin.* It is the prince of palfreys ; his neigh is like the bidding of a monarch and his countenance enforces homage.

*Orleans.* No more, cousin.

*Dauphin.* Nay, the man hath no wit that cannot, from the rising of the lark to the lodging of the lamb, vary deserved praise on my palfrey : it is a theme as fluent as the sea ; turn the sands into eloquent tongues, and my horse is argument for them all. 'Tis a subject for a sovereign to reason on, and for a sovereign's sovereign to ride on ; and for the world—familiar to us, and unknown—to lay apart their particular functions and wonder at him. I once writ a sonnet in his praise and began thus : " Wonder of nature ! "—

*Orleans.* I have heard a sonnet begin so to one's mistress.

*Dauphin.* Then did they imitate that which I composed to my courser, for my horse is my mistress.

*Orleans.* Your mistress bears well.

*Dauphin.* Me well ; which is the prescript praise and perfection of a good and particular mistress.

*Constable.* *Ma foi,* methought yesterday your mistress shrewdly shook your back.

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*Dauphin.* So perhaps did yours.

*Constable.* Mine was not bridled.

*Dauphin.* O ! then belike she was old and gentle ;  
and you rode, like a kern of Ireland, your French hose  
off and in your straight strossers.

*Constable.* You have good judgment in horsemanship.

*Dauphin.* Be warned by me, then : they that ride  
so, and ride not warily, fall into foul bogs. I had  
rather have my horse to my mistress.

*Constable.* I had as lief have my mistress a jade.

*Dauphin.* I tell thee, constable, my mistress wears  
his own hair.

*Constable.* I could make as true a boast as that if I  
had a sow to my mistress.

*Dauphin.* *Le chien est retourné à son propre vomissement, et la truie lavée au bourbier :* thou makest  
use of any thing.

*Constable.* Yet do I not use my horse for my  
mistress : or any such proverb so little kin to the  
purpose.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

TWELVE

2 KING HENRY THE FOURTH. ACT IV. Sc. iii.

*Falstaff forswears thin Potations.*

*Falstaff.* Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me ; nor a man cannot make him laugh ; but that's no marvel, he drinks no wine. There's never none of these demure boys come to any proof ; for thin drink doth so over-cool their blood, and making many fish-meals, that they fall into a kind of male green-sickness ; and then, when they marry, they get wenches. They are generally fools and cowards, which some of us should be too but for inflammation. A good sherris-sack hath a two-fold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain ; dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudyl vapours which environ it ; makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble fiery and delectable shapes ; which, deliver'd o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit. The second property of your excellent sherris is, the warming of the blood ; which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice : but the sherris warms it and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extreme. It illumineth the face, which, as a beacon, gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm ; and then the vital commoners and inland

### PHILOSOPHIES

petty spirits muster me all to their captain, the heart, who, great and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage, and this valour comes of sherris. So that skill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that sets it a-work ; and learning, a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil till sack commences it and sets it in act and use. Hereof comes it that Prince Harry is valiant ; for the cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father, he hath, like lean, sterile, and bare land, manured, husbanded, and tilled, with excellent endeavour of drinking good and good store of fertile sherris, that he is become very hot and valiant. If I had a thousand sons, the first human principle I would teach them should be, to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

THIRTEEN

KING HENRY THE FIFTH. ACT IV. Sc. vii.  
*Macedon and Monmouth.*

(*Alarums. Enter FLUELLEN and GOWER.*)

*Fluellen.* Kill the poys and the luggage ! 'tis expressly against the law of arms . 'tis as arrant a piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offer 't : in your conscience now, is it not ?

*Gower.* 'Tis certain, there's not a boy left alive ; and the cowardly rascals that ran from the battle have done this slaughter : besides, they have burned and carried away all that was in the king's tent ; wherefore the king most worthily hath caused every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat. O ! 'tis a gallant king.

*Fluellen.* Ay, he was born at Monmouth, Captain Gower. What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born ?

*Gower.* Alexander the Great.

*Fluellen.* Why, I pray you, is not pig great ? The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations.

*Gower.* I think Alexander the Great was born in Macedon : his father was called Philip of Macedon, as I take it.

*Fluellen.* I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is born. I tell you, captain, if you look in the maps of the 'orl'd, I warrant you sall find, in the comparisons

## PHILOSOPHIES

between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth : it is called Wye at Monmouth ; but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river ; but 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well ; for there is figures in all things. Alexander,—God knows, and you know,—in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicates in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his pest friend, Cleitus.

*Gower.* Our king is not like him in that : he never killed any of his friends.

*Fluellen.* It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it : as Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups, so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments, turned away the fat knight with the great belly-doublet : he was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks ; I have forgot his name.

*Gower.* Sir John Falstaff.

*Fluellen.* That is he. I'll tell you, there is goot men porn at Monmouth.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

FOURTEEN

As You Like It. Act V. Sc. iv.

*The Art of Quarrelling.*

*Touchstone.* I have trod a measure ; I have flattered a lady ; I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy ; I have undone three tailors ; I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one.

*Jaques.* And how was that ta'en up ?

*Touchstone.* Faith, we met, and found the quarrel was upon the seventh cause.

*Jaques.* How seventh cause ? Good my lord, like this fellow.

*Duke.* I like him very well.

*Touchstone.* God 'ld you, sir ; I desire you of the like. I press in here, sir, amongst the rest of the country copulatives, to swear, and to forswear, according as marriage binds and blood breaks. A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own : a poor humour of mine, sir, to take that that no man else will. Rich honesty dwells like a miser, sir, in a poor house, as your pearl in your foul oyster.

*Duke.* By my faith, he is very swift and sententious.

*Touchstone.* According to the fool's bolt, sir, and such dulcet diseases.

*Jaques.* But, for the seventh cause ; how did you find the quarrel on the seventh cause ?

PHILOSOPHIES

*Touchstone.* Upon a lie seven times removed :—bear your body more seeming, Audrey —as thus, sir. I did dislike the cut of a certain courtier's beard : he sent me word, if I said his beard was not cut well, he was in the mind it was : this is called “the retort courteous.” If I sent him word again, it was not well cut, he would send me word, he cut it to please himself : this is called the “quip modest.” If again, it was not well cut, he disabled my judgment : this is called the “reply churlish.” If again, it was not well cut, he would answer, I spake not true : this is called the “reproof valiant” : if again, it was not well cut, he would say, I lie : this is called the “countercheck quarrelsome” : and so to the “lie circumstantial,” and the “lie direct.”

*Jaques.* And how oft did you say his beard was not well cut ?

*Touchstone.* I durst go no further than the “lie circumstantial,” nor he durst not give me the “lie direct” ; and so we measured swords and parted.

*Jaques.* Can you nominate in order now the degrees of the lie ?

*Touchstone.* O sir, we quarrel in print ; by the book, as you have books for good manners : I will name you the degrees. The first, the “retort courteous” ; the second, the “quip modest” ; the third, the “reply churlish” ; the fourth, the “reproof valiant” ; the fifth, the “countercheck quarrelsome” ; the sixth, the “lie with circumstance” ; the seventh,

#### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

the “lie direct.” All these you may avoid but the lie direct ; and you may avoid that too, with an “if.” I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel ; but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an “if,” as “ If you said so, then I said so ” ; and they shook hands and swore brothers. Your “if” is the only peace-maker ; much virtue in “if.”

PHILOSOPHIES

FIFTEEN

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST. ACT V. SC. 1.

*The Pedagogue and the Gallant.*

(HOLOFERNES, SIR NATHANIEL, AND DULL.)

*Holofernes. Satis quod sufficit.*

*Nathaniel.* I praise God for you, Sir : your reasons at dinner have been sharp and sententious, pleasant without scurrility, witty without affection, audacious without impudency, learned without opinion, and strange without heresy. I did converse this *quondam* day with a companion of the king's, who is intituled, nominated, or called, Don Adriano de Armado.

*Holofernes.* *Novi hominem tanquam te :* his humour is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gait majestical, and his general behaviour vain, ridiculous, and thrasonical. He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too perigrinate, as I may call it.

*Nathaniel.* A most singular and choice epithet.

(Takes out his table-book.)

*Holofernes.* He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasimes, such unsociable and point-devise companions ; such rackers of orthography, as to speak, *dout*, fine, when he should say *doubt* ; *det*, when he should pronounce *debt*—*d, e, b, t*, not *d, e, t* : he clepeth a calf, *cauf* ; half, *hauf* ; neighbour,

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*vocatur, nebour*; neigh, abbreviated, *ne*. This is abominable, (which he would call abominable,) it insinuateth me of insanie; *anne intelligis, domine?* to make frantic, lunatic.

*Nathaniel.* *Laus Deo, bone intelligo.*

*Holofernes.* *Bone?*—*bone*, for *benè*: *Priscian* a little scratched; 'twill serve.

(Enter ARMADO, MOTH, and COSTARD.)

*Nathaniel.* *Videsne quis venit?*

*Holofernes.* *Video, et gaudeo.*

*Armado.* Chirrah! [To MOTH.]

*Holofernes.* Quare Chirrah, not sirrah?

*Armado.* Men of peace, well encounter'd.

*Holofernes.* Most military Sir, salutation.

*Moth.* They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps. [To COSTARD aside.]

*Costard.* O, they have lived long in the alms-basket of words! I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee for a word; for thou art not so long by the head as *honorificabilitudinitatibus*: thou art easier swallowed than a flapdragon.

*Moth.* Peace; the peal begins.

*Armado.* Monsieur, (To HOLOFERNES) you are not letter'd?

*Moth.* Yes, yes; he teaches boys the horn-book:—What is a, b, spelt backward with a horn on his head?

*Holofernes.* Ba, *pueritia*, with a horn added.

*Moth.* Ba, most silly sheep, with a horn.—You hear his learning.

PHILOSOPHIES

*Holofernes.* *Quis, quis,* thou consonant?

*Moth.* The third of the five vowels, if you repeat them; or the fifth, if I.

*Holofernes.* I will repeat them,—a, e, i.—

*Moth.* The sheep: the other two concludes it; o, u.

*Armado.* Now, by the salt wave of the Mediteraneum, a sweet touch, a quick venew of wit: snip, snap, quick and home! it rejoiceth my intellect: true wit!

*Moth.* Offered by a child to an old man; which is wit-old.

*Holofernes.* What is the figure? what is the figure?

*Moth.* Horns.

*Holofernes.* Thou disputest like an infant; go, whip thy gig.

*Moth.* Lend me your horn to make one, and I will whip about your infamy *circum circà*; a gig of a cuckold's horn!

*Costard.* An I had but one penny in the world, thou shouldst have it to buy gingerbread: hold, there is the very remuneration I had of thy master, thou halfpenny curse of wit, thou pigeon-egg of discretion. O, an the heavens were so pleased, that thou wert but my bastard! what a joyful father wouldest thou make me! Go to; thou hast it *ad dunghill*, at the fingers' ends, as they say.

*Holofernes.* O, I smell false Latin; dunghill for unguem.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*Armado.* Arts-man, *preambula*; we will be singled from the barbarous. Do you not educate youth at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?

*Holofernes.* Or, *mons*, the hill.

*Armado.* At your sweet pleasure, for the mountain.

*Holofernes.* I do, sans question.

*Armado.* Sir, it is the king's most sweet pleasure and affection, to congratulate the princess at her pavilion, in the posteriors of this day, which the rude multitude call the afternoon

*Holofernes.* The posterior of the day, most generous Sir, is liable, congruent, and measurable for the afternoon: the word is well cull'd, chose; sweet and apt, I do assure you, Sir, I do assure.

*Armado.* Sir, the king is a noble gentleman: and my familiar, I do assure you, very good friend—for what is inward between us, let it pass:—I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy;—I beseech thee, apparel thy head;—and among other importunate and most serious designs,—and of great import indeed, too;—but let that pass;—for I must tell thee, it will please his grace (by the world) sometime to lean upon my poor shoulder; and with his royal finger, thus, dally with my excrement, with my mustachio: but, sweet heart, let that pass. By the world, I recount no fable; some certain special honours it pleaseth his greatness to impart to Armado, a soldier, a man of travel, that hath seen the world: but let that pass.—The very all of all is,—but, sweet heart, I do implore secrecy,—

PHILOSOPHIES

that the king would have me present the princess, sweet chuck, with some delightful ostentation, or show, or pageant, or antic, or firework Now, understanding that the curate and your sweet self, are good at such eruptions, and sudden breaking out of mirth, as it were, I have acquainted you withal, to the end to crave your assistance

*Holofernes.* Sir, you shall present before her the nine worthies.—Sir Nathaniel, as concerning some entertainment of time, some show in the posterior of this day, to be rendered by our assistance,—the king's command, and this most gallant, illustrate, and learned gentleman,—before the princess , I say, none so fit as to present the nine worthies.

*Nathaniel.* Where will you find men worthy enough to present them ?

*Holofernes.* Joshua, yourself ; myself or this gallant gentleman, Judas Maccabæus ; this swain, because of his great limb or joint, shall pass Pompey the Great ; the page, Hercules.

*Armado.* Pardon, Sir, error . he is not quantity enough for that worthy's thumb : he is not so big as the end of his club.

*Holofernes.* Shall I have audience ? he shall present Hercules in minority : his *enter* and *exit* shall be strangling a snake ; and I will have an apology for that purpose.

*Moth.* An excellent device ! so, if any of the audience hiss, you may cry, “ Well done, Hercules !

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

now thou crushest the snake ! ” that is the way to make an offence gracious ; though few have the grace to do it.

*Armado.* For the rest of the worthies ?—

*Holofernes.* I will play three myself.

*Moth.* Thrice-worthy gentleman !

*Armado.* Shall I tell you a thing ?

*Holofernes.* We attend.

*Armado.* We will have, if this fadge not, an antic. I beseech you, follow.

*Holofernes.* *Via,* goodman Dull ! thou hast spoken no word all this while.

*Dull.* Nor understood none neither, Sir.

*Holofernes.* *Allons !* we will employ thee.

*Dull.* I'll make one in a dance, or so ; or I will play on the tabor to the worthies, and let them dance the hay.

*Holofernes.* Most dull, honest Dull : to our sport, away.

PHILOSOPHIES

SIXTEEN

KING HENRY THE FIFTH. ACT. III. SC. iv.

*A lesson in English.*

SCENE IV.—ROUEN.

*A Room in the Palace.*

(Enter KATHARINE and ALICE.

Katharine. Alice, tu as été en Angleterre, et tu parles bien le language.

Alice. Un peu, madame.

Katharine. Je te prie, m'enseignez ; il faut que j'apprenne à parler. Comment appellez vous la main, en Anglois ?

Alice. La main ? elle est appellée, de hand.

Katharine. De hand. Et les doigts ?

Alice. Les doigts ? may foy, je oublie les doigts ; mais je me souviendray. Les doigts ? je pense, qu'ils sont appellés de fingres ; ouy, de fingres.

Katharine. La main, de hand ; les doigts, de fingres. Je pense, que je suis le bon escolier. J'ay gagné deux mots d'Anglois vistement. Comment appellez vous les ongles ?

Alice. Les ongles ? les appellons, de nails.

Katharine. De nails. Escoutez ; dites moy, si je parle bien : de hand, de fingres, de nails.

Alice. C'est bien dict, madame ; il est fort bon Anglois.

Katharine. Dites moy en Anglois pour le bras.

Alice. De arm, madame.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*Katharine. Et le coude?*

*Alice. De elbow.*

*Katharine. De elbow. Je m'en faitz la répétition de tous les mots que vous m'avez appris dés à présent.*

*Alice. Il est trop difficile, madame, comme je pense.*

*Katharine. Excusez moy, Alice ; escoutez : de hand, de fingres, de nails, de arma, de bilbow.*

*Alice. De elbow, madame.*

*Katharine. O Seigneur Dieu ! je m'en oublie ; de elbow. Comment appellez vous le col ?*

*Alice. De nick, madame.*

*Katharine. De nick. Et le menton ?*

*Alice. De chin.*

*Katharine. De sin. Le col, de nick : le menton, de sin.*

*Alice. Ouy. Sauf vostre honneur, en vérité vous prononcez les mots aussi droict que les natifs d'Angleterre.*

*Katharine. Je ne doute point d'apprendre par la grace de Dieu, et en peu de temps.*

*Alice. N'avez vous déjà oublié ce que je vous ay enseignée ?*

*Katharine. Non, je reciteray à vous promptement. De hand, de fingre, de mails,—*

*Alice. De nails, madame.*

*Katharine. De nails, de arme, de ilbow.*

*Alice. Sauf vostre honneur, d'elbow.*

*Katharine. Ainsi dis je ; d'elbow, de nick, et de sin. Comment appellez vous le pied et la robe ?*

*Alice. De foot, madame ; et de coun.*

## PHILOSOPHIES

*Katharine.* De foot, et de coun ? O Seigneur Dieu ! ces sont mots de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non pour les dames d'honneur d'user. Je ne voudrois prononcer ces mots devant les seigneurs de France, pour tout le monde. Foh ! le foot, et le coun Néanmoins je reciterai une autre fois ma leçon ensemble : de hand, de fingre, de nails, d'arm, d'elbow, de nick, de sin, de foot, de coun.

*Alice.* Excellent, madame !

*Katharine.* C'est assez pour une fois : allons nous à dîner.

[*Exeunt.*]

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

SEVENTEEN

KING HENRY V. ACT V. SC ii.

*Another lesson in English.*

*King Henry, Katharine, and Alice.*

*King Henry.* Fair Katharine, and most fair !

Will you vouchsafe to teach a soldier terms,  
Such as will enter at a lady's ear,  
And plead his love-suit to her gentle heart ?

*Katharine.* Your majesty shall mock at me ; I cannot speak your England.

*King Henry.* O fair Katharine ! if you will love me soundly with your French heart, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue. Do you like me, Kate ?

*Katharine.* *Pardonnez moy,* I cannot tell what is ' like me.'

*King Henry.* An angel is like you, Kate ; and you are like an angel.

*Katharine.* *Que dit-il ? que je suis semblable à les anges ?*

*Alice.* *Ouy, vraiment, sauf vostre grace, ainsi dit-il.*

*King Henry.* I said so, dear Katharine ; and I must not blush to affirm it.

*Katharine.* *O bon Dieu ! les langues des hommes sont pleines des tromperies.*

*King Henry.* What says she, fair one ? that the tongues of men are full of deceits ?

PHILOSOPHIES

*Alice.* Ouy, dat de tongues of de mans is be full of deceits : dat is de princess.

*King Henry.* The princess is the better English-woman. I' faith, Kate, my wooing is fit for thy understanding : I am glad thou canst speak no better English ; for, if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me such a plain king that thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say ' I love you ' : then, if you urge me further than to say ' Do you in faith ? ' I wear out my suit. Give me your answer ; i' faith do : and so clap hands and a bargain. How say you, lady ?

*Katharine.* *Sauf vostre honneur,* me understand vell.

*King Henry.* Marry, if you would put me to verses, or to dance for your sake, Kate, why you undid me : for the one, I have neither words nor measure, and for the other, I have no strength in measure, yet a reasonable measure in strength. If I could win a lady at leap-frog, or by vaulting into my saddle with my armour on my back, under the correction of bragging be it spoken, I should quickly leap into a wife. Or if I might buffet for my love, or bound my horse for her favours, I could lay on like a butcher and sit like a jack-an-apes, never off. But before God, Kate, I cannot look greenly nor gasp out my eloquence, nor I have no cunning in protestation ; only downright oaths, which I never use till urged, nor never break for urging. If thou canst love a fellow of this temper, Kate, whose face is not worth sun-burning, that never looks in his glass for love of

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

anything he sees there, let thine eye be thy cook. I speak to thee plain soldier . if thou canst love me for this, take me ; if not, to say to thee that I shall die, is true ; but for thy love, by the Lord, no ; yet I love thee too. And while thou livest, dear Kate, take a fellow of plain and uncoined constancy, for he perforce must do thee right, because he hath not the gift to woo in other places ; for these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rime themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again. What ! a speaker is but a prater ; a rime is but a ballad. A good leg will fall, a straight back will stoop, a black beard will turn white, a curled pate will grow bald, a fair face will wither, a full eye will wax hollow, but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon ; or rather, the sun, and not the moon ; for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps his course truly. If thou would have such a one, take me ; and take me, take a soldier ; take a soldier, take a king. And what sayest thou then to my love ? speak, my fair, and fairly, I pray thee.

*Katharine.* Is it possible dat I sould love de enemy of France ?

*King Henry.* No ; it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, Kate ; but, in loving me, you should love the friend of France ; for I love France so well, that I will not part with a village of it ; I will have it all mine : and, Kate, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine.

*Katharine.* I cannot tell vat is dat.

PHILOSOPHIES

*King Henry.* No, Kate ? I will tell thee in French, which I am sure will hang upon my tongue like a new-married wife about her husband's neck, hardly to be shook off. *Je quand sur le possession de France, et quand vous avez le possession de moy,—let me see, what then ? Saint Denis be my speed !—donc vostre est France, et vous estes mienne.* It is as easy for me, Kate, to conquer the kingdom, as to speak so much more French : I shall never move thee in French, unless it be to laugh at me.

*Katharine.* *Sauf vostre honneur, le François que vous parlez est meilleur que l'Anglois lequel je parle.*

*King Henry.* No, faith, is't not, Kate ; but thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most truly falsely, must needs be granted to be much at one. But, Kate, dost thou understand thus much English, Canst thou love me ?

*Katharine.* I cannot tell.

*King Henry.* Can any of your neighbours tell, Kate ? I'll ask them. Come, I know thou lovest me ; and at night when you come into your closet you'll question this gentlewoman about me ; and I know, Kate, you will to her dispraise those parts in me that you love with your heart : but, good Kate, mock me mercifully ; the rather, gentle princess, because I love thee cruelly. If ever thou be'st mine, Kate,—as I have a saving faith within me tells me thou shalt,—I get thee with scambling, and thou must therefore needs prove a good soldier-breeder. Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople  
and take the Turk by the beard? shall we not? what  
sayest thou, my fair flower-de-luce?

*Katharine.* I do not know dat.

*King Henry.* No ; 'tis hereafter to know, but now to  
promise : do but now promise, Kate, you will endeavour  
for your French part of such a boy, and for my English  
moiety take the word of a king and a bachelor. How  
answer you, *la plus belle Katharine du monde, mon très  
cher et divine deesse?*

*Katharine.* Your *majesté ave fausse* French enough  
to deceive de most *sage demoiselle* dat is *en France*.

*King Henry.* Now, fie upon my false French ! By  
mine honour, in true English I love thee, Kate : by  
which honour I dare not swear thou lovest me ; yet my  
blood begins to flatter me that thou dost, notwithstanding-  
ing the poor and untempering effect of my visage. Now  
beshrew my father's ambition ! he was thinking of civil  
wars when he got me : therefore was I created with a  
stubborn outside, and an aspect of iron, that, when I  
come to woo ladies I fright them. But, in faith, Kate,  
the elder I wax the better I shall appear : my comfort  
is, that old age, that ill layer-up of beauty, can do no  
more spoil upon my face : thou hast me, if thou hast me,  
at the worst ; and thou shalt wear me, if thou wear me,  
better and better. And therefore tell me, most fair  
Katharine, will you have me ? Put off your maiden  
blushes ; avouch the thoughts of your heart with the  
looks of an empress ; take me by the hand, and say

PHILOSOPHIES

‘ Harry of England, I am thine’ : which word thou shalt no sooner bless mine ear withal, but I will tell thee aloud—‘ England is thine, Ireland is thine, France is thine, and Henry Plantagenet is thine’ ; who, though I speak it before his face, if he be not fellow with the best king, thou shalt find the best king of good fellows. Come, your answer in broken music ; for thy voice is music, and thy English broken ; therefore, queen of all, Katharine, break thy mind to me in broken English : wilt thou have me ?

*Katharine.* Dat is as it sall please de *roy mon père*

*King Henry.* Nay, it will please him well, Kate ; it shall please him, Kate.

*Katharine.* Den it sall also content me.

*King Henry.* Upon that I kiss your hand, and I call you my queen.

*Katharine.* *Laissez, mon seigneur, laissez, laissez ! Ma foy, je ne veux point que vous abaissez vostre grandeur, en baisant la main d'une vostre indigne serviteur ; excusez moy, je vous supple, mon très puissant seigneur.*

*King Henry.* Then I will kiss your lips, Kate.

*Katharine.* *Les dames, et demoiselles, pour estre baisées devant leur noces, il n'est pas la coutume de France.*

*King Henry.* Madam, my interpreter, what says she ?

*Alice.* Dat it is not be de fashion *pour les ladies of France*,—I cannot tell what is *baiser* in English.

*King Henry.* To kiss.

*Alice.* Your majesty *entendre* bettre que moy.

SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

*King Henry.* It is not the fashion for the maids in France to kiss before they are married, would she say?

*Alice Ouy, vrayment.*

*King Henry.* O Kate, nice customs curt'sy to great kings. Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country's fashion : we are the makers of manners, Kate ; and the liberty that follows our places stops the mouths of all find-faults,—as I will do yours, for upholding the nice fashion of your country in denying me a kiss ; therefore, patiently, and yielding. (*Kissing her.*) You have witchcraft on your lips, Kate : there is more eloquence in a sugar touch of them, than in the tongues of the French council ; and they should sooner persuade Harry of England, than a general petition of monarchs.—Here comes your father.

PHILOSOPHIES

EIGHTEEN

TWO EPILOGUES.

EPILOGUE TO 2 KING HENRY IV.

*Spoken by a Dancer.*

First, my fear ; then, my curtsy ; last my speech. My fear is, your displeasure, my curtsy, my duty, and my speech, to beg your pardon. If you look for a good speech now, you undo me ; for what I have to say is of mine own making ; and what indeed I should say will, I doubt, prove mine own marring. But to the purpose, and so to the venture. Be it known to you,—as it is very well,—I was lately here in the end of a displeasing play, to pray your patience for it and to promise you a better. I did mean indeed to pay you with this ; which, if like an ill venture it come unluckily home, I break, and you, my gentle creditors, lose. Here, I promised you I would be, and here I commit my body to your mercies ; bate me some and I will pay you some ; and, as most debtors do, promise you infinitely.

If my tongue cannot entreat you to acquit me, will you command me to use my legs ? and yet that were but light payment, to dance out of your debt. But a good conscience will make any possible satisfaction, and so will I. All the gentlewomen here have forgiven me : if the gentlemen will not, then the gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen, which was never seen before in such an assembly.

#### SHAKESPEARE AS AN ARTIST IN PROSE

One word more, I beseech you. If you be not too much cloyed with fat meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France : where, for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already a' be killed with your hard opinions ; for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man. My tongue is weary ; when my legs are too, I will bid you good night : and so kneel down before you ; but, indeed, to pray for the queen.

PHILOSOPHIES

EPILOGUE TO AS YOU LIKE IT.

*Rosalind.* It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue : but it is no more unhandsome, than to see the lord the prologue. If it be true, that “ good wine needs no bush,” ‘tis true, that a good play needs no epilogue : yet to good wine they do use good bushes ; and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues. What a case am I in then, that am neither a good epilogue, nor can insinuate with you in the behalf of a good play ? I am not furnished like a beggar, therefore to beg will not become me : my way is, to conjure you ; and I’ll begin with the women. I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please them : and so I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women (as I perceive by your simpering, none of you hate them) that between you and the women, the play may please. If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not : and, I am sure, as many as have good beards, or good faces, or sweet breaths, will, for my kind offer, when I make my curt’sy, bid me farewell.

PART IV.  
NOTES HERE AND THERE.



## PART IV.

### NOTES HERE AND THERE.

#### INTRODUCTION.

*Queen Elizabeth to Lady Norris upon the death of her son.*

Although we have deferred long to represent unto you our grieved thoughts, because we liked full well to yield you the first Reflections of our Misfortunes, whom we have always sought to cherish and comfort ; yet knowing now what necessity must bring it to your ears, and nature consequently must move many passionate affections in your Heart, we have resolved no longer to smother, either our care for your sorrow, or the sympathy of our grief for his Death ; wherein if society in sorrowing work diminution, we do assure you by this true messenger of our Mind, that Nature can have stirred no more dolorous affections in you as a mother for a dear Son, than the gratefulness and memory of his Services past had wrought in us his Sovereign apprehension of the miss of so worthy a Servant. But now that Nature's common Work is done, and he that was born to die hath paid his Tribute, let that Christian Discretion stay the flux of your immoderate grieving which hath instructed you both by Example and Knowledge, that nothing of this kind hath happened but by God's Providence, and that these Lines from your loving

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

and gracious Sovereign serve to assure you, that there shall ever appear the lively Characters of you and yours that are left, in our valuing rightly all their faithful and honest Endeavours. More we will not write of this subject, but have dispatched this Gentleman to visit both your Lord, and condole with you in the true sense of your Love ; and to pray you, that the World may see, that what Time cureth in weak Minds, that Discretion and Moderation may help in you in this Accident, where there is so opportune occasion to demonstrate true Patience and true Moderation.

\* \* \*

In 2 King Henry IV, Act II, Sc. ii, just after the reading of Falstaff's letter, the Prince says :

" Well, thus we play the fools with the time ; and the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds, and mock us."

Of this, R. P. Cowl says that perhaps this is adapted from Psalms, II, iv : " He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision." A parody of euphuism is probably intended in the Prince's speech ; the expression " the wise " is a favourite with Lyly, and the antithesis of " fools " and " the wise " is in his manner. In Lyly's *Euphues : Anatomy of Wyt*, Preface : " I submit myself to the judgment of the wise, and I little esteem the censure of fools."

The influence of the Biblical prose in Shakespeare is not easily traced, so that this possible instance is interesting.

NOTES HERE AND THERE

LETTER ONE

*Armado's letter to the King.*

"North-north-east and by east from the west corner  
of thy curious knotted garden."

Attention to points of the compass is common in the horticulture of the renaissance period. The "curious knotted garden" reminds us of Bacon's essay—"for the making of Knots or Figures, with Divers Coloured Earths . . .", not to mention Evelyn on gardens and the wonderful quincunxes in Browne's *Cyrus' Garden*. Shirley's *Gentleman of Venice* (Act I, Sc. ii) :

"When I am digging, he is cutting unicorns  
And lions in some hedge, or else devising  
New knots upon the ground, drawing out crowns,  
And the duke's arms, castles and cannons in them."

The Italianate garden was a sort of horticultural euphuism. In *Euphues* there is a passage which suggests that Shakespeare had certainly been reading it :

"They might also have taken example of the wise husbandmen, who in their fattest and most fertil ground sow Hempe before Wheat, a graine that dryeth up the superfluous moysture, and maketh the soyle more apt for corne : Or of good Gardeiners who in their *curious knots* mixe *Hisoppe with Time* as ayders the one to the

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

growth of the other . . . If therefore thy Father had bene as wise an husbandman as he was a fortunate husbande, or thy Mother as good a huswife as she was a happy wife, if they had bene both as good Gardiners to keepe their *knotte*, as they were grafters to bring forth such fruit . . . as they wer happy parents, no doubt they had sowed Hempe before Wheat, that is, discipline before affection, they had set *Hisoppe with Time*, that is, manners with witte . . .”

We are here reminded not only of Armado's letter but of Iago's philosophy of virtue (*Othello*, Act I, Sc. iii): “Our bodies are our gardens . . . so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set *hyssop* and weed up *thyme* . . .”

And in *Richard II* (Act IV, Sc. iv) on England :

“When our sea-walled gardens, the whole land,  
Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,  
Her fruit-trees all unpruned, her hedges ruin'd,  
Her *knots* disorder'd and her wholesome herbs  
Swarming with caterpillars . . .”

#### LETTERS ONE AND TWO

E. Kirk, writing to Gabriel Harvey about Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), lamented the “naturall English words” allowed to become obsolete :

“which default wheneas some endeavoured to salve

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

and recure, they patched up the holes with peeces and rags of other languages, borrowing here of the French, there of the Italian, everywhere of the Latine, not weighing how il those tongues accorde with themselves, but much worse with ours . so now they have made our English tongue a gallimaufray or hodge-podge of al other speches."

So in same play (*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V, Sc. i) all the extravagances avoided by Armado are supplied by Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes. And yet even Holofernes must have his fling at "such fanatical phantasimes, such insociable and point-device companions ; such rackers of orthography." But it is Costard who drags in the mediæval joke of the longest word : *honorificabilitudinitatibus!* It occurs in subsequent Elizabethan plays. Dante used it 390 years before.

When Armado and Holofernes are in full swing they can rise to supreme heights (see page 168).

Later (Act V, Sc. ii), when Biron has had his say about "Monsieur Nice," the King says, with feeling, "A blister on his sweet tongue, with my heart."

In Gabriel Harvey's "Pierces Supererogation, or a New Prayse of the Old Asse : an advertisement for Papp-hatchett, and Martin Mar-prelate" (1593) :

" I cannot stand nosing of candlestickes, or euphuing of Similes, *alla Savoica* : it might happily be done with

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

a trice : but every man hath not the gift of *Albertus Magnus*. rare birds are dainty ; and they are queint creatures, that are privileged to create new creatures. When I have a mint of precious stones ; and straunge Foules, beastes, and fishes of mine owne coyning, (I could name the party, that in comparison of his owne naturall Inventions, tearmed Pliny a barraine woombe ;) I may peradventure blesse you with your own crosses, and pay you with the usury of your own coyne. In the meane while beare with a plaine man, as plaine as old Accursius, or Barthol de Saxo ferrato ; that wil make his censure good upon the carrion of thy unsavory, and stincking Pamflett ; a fitt booke to be joyned with Scoggins woorkes, or the French Mirrour of Madnesse. The very Title discovereth the wisedom of the young-man : as an olde Fox not long since bewrayed himselfe by a flap of his taile ; and a Lion, they say, is soone described by his pawe ; a Cocke by his combe ; a goat by his bearde ; an Asse by his eare ; a wise-man by his tale ; an artist by his tearmes.”

(“*Papp with an hatchet : alias, a Figg for my God-sonne ; or, Cracke me this nutt ; or, a Country Cuffe, that is, A sound boxe of the eare, & cetera.*

*Written by one, that dares call a Dog a Dog.*

*Imprinted by John Anoke, and John Astile, for the Baily  
of Witherman, cum privilegio perennitatis :  
And are to be sold at the signe of the Crabbtree Cudgell  
in Thwack-coate Lane.”)*

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

Harvey himself is of course not only a fluent letter-writer of that age, but we have more of his letters preserved than of any of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, Gabriel Harvey himself is a writer whom Shakespeare is making Armado parody. The expression in his letter to the king, "The time when. . . the ground which, the place where" had already been used exactly in Harvey's *Judgement of Earthquakes*:

"We are to judge of as advisedly and providently, as possibly we can, by the consideration and comparison of circumstances, the tyme when : the *place where* : the qualities and dispositions of the persons, *amongst whom such.*"

This queer affectation is in the *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) by Thomas Wilson, who is in *The Third Booke* a severe critic of high falutin' affectations. Nevertheless, he can write :

"Seven circumstances are to be considered in diverse matters . . . who, what, and where, by what helpe and by whose : why, how and when, doe many thinges disclose."

*The Third Booke* is entitled :

"Of apt chusing and framing of words and sentences together, called Elocution . . ."

## SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

The subsection following it deals with :

“ Fower partes belonging to Elocution :

- i Plainnesse.
- ii Aptnesse.
- iii Composition.
- iv Exornation.

“ PLAINNESSE, WHAT IT IS.

“ Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that wee never affect any straunge ynkehorne termes, but to speake as is commonly received : neither seeking to be over fine, nor yet living over-carelesse using our speeche as most men doe, and ordering our wittes as the fewest have done. Some seeke so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language. And I dare sweare this, if some of their mothers were alive, thei were not able to tell what they say : and yet these fine English clerkes will say, they speake in their mother tongue, if a man should charge them for counterfeiting the King’s English. Some farre journeyed gentleman at their returne home like as they love to go in forraine apparell, so thei wil ponder their talke with oversea language. He that commeth lately out of Fraunce, will talke Frennch English and never blush at the matter. An other chops in with English Italianated, and applieth the Italian phrase to our English speaking, the which is, as if an oratour that professeth to utter his mind in plaine Latine, would needes speake Poetrie, and farre fetched colours of

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straunge antiquitie. The Lawyer will store his stomacke with the prating of Pedlers. The Auditor in making his accompt and reckening, cometh in with *sise sould*, and *cater denere*, for vi.s. iii d. The fine courtier wil talke nothing but *Chaucer*. The mysticall wiseman and Poeticall Clerkes will speake nothing but quaint Proverbes, and blinde Allegories, delighting much in their owne darkenesse, especially, when none can tell what they doe say. The unlearned or foolish phantasticall, that smelles but of learning (such fellowes as have seen learned men in their daies) wil so Latin their tongues, that the simple can not but wonder at their talke, and thinke surely they speake by some revelation. I know them that thinke *Rhetorique* to stande wholie upon darke wordes, and hee that can catche an ynkehorne terme by the taile, him they coumpt to be a fine Englisheman, and a good *Rhetorician*. And the rather to set out this foly, I will adde such a letter as William Sommer himselfe, could not make a better for that purpose. Some will thinke and sweare it too, that there was never any such thing written : well, I will not force any man to beleeve it, but I will say thus much, and abide by it too, the like have been made heretofore, and praised above the Moone.

A letter devised by a Lincolnshire man, for a voyde benefice, to a gentleman that then waited upon the Lorde Chauncellour, for the time being.”

The letter is as much like a parody as the language of

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

Armado and Holofernes at its most extravagant, but it is obviously well-grounded parody :

“ Pondering, expending, and revolving with my selfe, your ingent affabilitie, and ingenious capacity for mundaine affaires : I cannot but celebrate, and extol your magnifical dexteritie above all other. For how could you have adepted such illustrate prerogative, and dominicall superioritie, if the fecunditie of your ingenie had not been so fertile and wonderful pregnant. Now therefore being accersited to such splendente renoune, and dignitie spendidious: Idoubt not but you will adiuuate such poore adnichilate orphanes, as whilome ware condisciples with you, and of antique familiaritie in Lincolneshire. Among whom I being a scholasticall panion, obtestate your sublimitie, to extoll mine infirmitie. There is a Sacerdotall dignitie in my native Countrey contiguate to me, where I now contemplate : which your worshipfull benignitie could sone impetratre for mee, if it would like you to extend your sedules, and collaudre me in them to the right honorouble lord Chaunceller, or rather Arch-grammacian of Englande. You know my literature, you knowe the pastorall promotion, I obtestate your clemencie, to invigilate thus much for me, according to my confidence, and as you knowe my condigne merites for such a compendious living. But now I relinquish to fatigate your intelligence, with any more frivilous verbosities, and therfore he that rules the climates, be evermore your beautreur, your fortresse, and your bulwarke. Amen.

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Dated at my Dome, or rather Mansion place in Lincolnshire, the penulte of the moneth sextile. *Anno Millmo, quillimo, trillimo.*

*Per me Ioannes Octo.*

#### LETTERS THREE AND FOUR

Biron, Longaville and Dumain write in verse, but Falstaff adopted the more customary mixture of verse and prose in the letter. Verse is introduced thus into prose letters by Rabelais, and also in several of the English comedies ante-dating this play. Nashe's *Martin Marprelate* tracts conclude :

“ To come to a close in Rime or in Prose,  
In spight of thy nose  
Thine for these seaven yeeres :

Pasquill of Englande.”

In Gabriel Harvey's Letter Book, the letters entitled “A Noble Mans Sute to a Cuntrie Maide,” include a farewell letter from the pursued milkmaid :

“ You knowe full well, Milord, faier words make fooles fain, and you weene of a like. Maides will refuse and take ; but I would not you should thinke me a chaungelinge. Wary would I faine be : cruell can I not be ; and your Lordship is unsatisfied, but not unhappy. Unhappy am I rather, that ——, but there a strawe. Tis not inke and paper, your man telles me, that can content Milord.

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

What, then, but put up mie pen.  
And pray God amende you ?  
And that be crueltie tooe, I knowe not what to dooe,  
But pray God sende you.  
Yours as she may,  
And not as you say,  
Though it greeve ye.  
Yours as she can,  
And not as you scan,  
You may beleeve me.  
And thus I pray you stay.

Pore M.”

But a more striking and earlier example is the genuine love letter written by Margery Brews to her Valentine, John Paston (No. 783 in Gairdner's edition of the *Paston Letters* : John Paston, I, was apt to add some verse to his letters also). The original spelling is left as an interesting example of orthography ; it was not to harden into one recognised convention for more than a century after this, as private letters in the Tudor period show.

“ Ryght reverent and wurschypfull, and my ryght welebeloved Voluntyne, I recomande me unto yowe, ffull hertely desyring to here of your welefare, wheche I beseche Almyghty God long for to preserve un to Hys plesur, and yowr herts desyre. And yf it please yowe

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to here of my welefar, I am not in good heele of body,  
nor of herte, nor schall be tyll I her ffrom yowe :

For there wottys no creature what peyn that I endure,  
And for to be deede, I dare it not dyscure.

And my lady my moder hath labored the mater to  
my ffadur full delygently, but sche can no more gete  
then ye knowe of, for the wheche God knowyth I am  
full sory. But yf that ye loffe me, as I tryste verely that  
ye do, ye will not leffe me therefor ; for if that ye hade  
not halfe the lyvelode that ye hafe, for to do the grettest  
labur that any woman on lyve myght, I wold not forsake  
yowe.

And yf ye commande me to kepe me true wherever I  
go,  
I wyse I will do all my myght yowe to love and never  
no mo.

And yf my freends say, that I do amys,  
Thei schal not me let so for to do,  
Myne herte me bydds ever more to love yowe  
Truly over all erthely thing.  
And yf thei be never so wroth,  
I tryst it schall be better in tyme commyng.

No more to yowe at this tyme, but the Holy Trinity  
hafe yowe in kepyng. And I besech you that this bill  
be not seyn of none erthely creatur safe only your selffe,  
&c.

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And thy letter was indyte at Topcroft, with full hevy  
herte, &c.

By your own,  
Margery Brews."

(MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR. ACT II. SC. 1)

*Though Love use Reason for his precisian, he admits  
him for his counsellor.*

Compare *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Sc. 1, where Bottom says to Titania : " Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that [i.e., 'on the first view, to say, to swear I love thee ']. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion."

H. C. Hart says " counsellor " in Falstaff's letter means " confidant." Falstaff means : " Ask not the reason. Love uses Reason as his priest or spiritual adviser, but he doesn't tell him his secrets."

Gabriel Harvey in *Pierces Supererogation* (quoted above), says : " Let order be the golden rule of proportion ; and I am as forward an Admonitioner as any Precisian in Ingland. If disorder must be the Discipline, and confusion the Reformatio (as without difference of degrees, it must needs) I crave pardon."

In *Every Man in his Humour* (Act III, Sc. ii) : " He's

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no precisian, that I'm certain of, Nor rigid Roman Catholic."

In *A Merry Knack to Know a Knave* (Har. Dods. vi, 519), 1594 : "PRIEST : And I among my brethren and my friends, do still instruct 'em with my doctrine,

And Yea and Naye goes through the world with us . . .  
Thus do we blind the world with holiness  
And so by that are termed pure Precisians."

Evidently a "precisian" was a near relative of the Puritan, who, a score of years later, was to be the butt of comic carols bewailing the decay of Christmas.

One more clue to *Euphues*. In Act I, Sc. ii, Falstaff says :

"I have writ me here a letter to her ; and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious œillades : sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

PISTOL. Then did the sun on dunghill shine."

In *Euphues* :

"No, no ! it is the disposition of the thought, that altereth the nature of the thing. The sunne shineth upon the doung hil, and is not corrupted . . . a perfect wit is never bewitched with leandenesse, neither entised with lasciviousness."

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LETTER FIVE

(2 KING HENRY IV. ACT II. Sc. ii.)

*Poins interrupts, etc.*

This is the version in the Arden Edition, which the Editor, R. Pape Cowl, justifies. Most modern editions make Poins read the letter, owing to his exclamation, '*John Falstaff, knight*' being taken for what he reads from the letter. It is more likely a quibbling reference to the Prince's words, 'Look you how he writes.' To write oneself was the common equivalent of to subscribe, describe or sign oneself. Poins's anticipation is justified, as well as realised, on the assumption that Falstaff would "as oft as he has occasion to name himself" add the handle to his name. There are plenty of examples in Elizabethan plays of the expression to write oneself. There is one in this play (Act I, Sc. ii) where Falstaff himself says to the page: "and yet he'll be crowing as if he had writ man ever since his father was a bachelor."

*To . . . greeting* was a common epistolary form, e.g., Lyly's *Euphues and his England*, Philautus' letter to Camilla (and others) begins "To . . . Camilla, greeting." Thinking of Lyly, we can detect a hint of Shakespeare's mockery of euphuism in this letter. It is clearer in Armado's letter (*q.v.*, and also, above, Thomas Wilson on "ynkehorne tearmes"). Falstaff's *I commend me . . .* was another common epistolary form, as in *A Looking Glasse for London and England*

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(Lodge and Greene) : "I'll commend me to you with heartie commendations."

*Thine, by yea and no . . .* is another epistolary trick then fashionable. It seemed to annoy Sordido, when he read the following letter (*Every Man Out of His Humour*, Act III, Sc. ii) from his son :—

" Sweet and dear father, desiring you first to send me your blessing, which is more worth to me than gold or silver, I desire you likewise to be advertised, that this Shrove-tide, contrary to custom, we use always to have revels ; which is indeed dancing, and makes an excellent shew in truth ; especially if we gentlemen be well attired, which our seniois note, and think the better of our fathers, the better we are maintained, and that they shall know if they come up, and have anything to do in the law ; therefore, good father, these are, for your own sake as well as mine, to redesire you, that you let me not want that which is fit for the setting up of our name in the honourable volume of gentility, that I may say to our calumniators, with Tully, *Ego sum ortus domus meæ tu occasus tue.* And thus, not doubting of your fatherly benevolence, I humbly ask your blessing and pray God to bless you.

Yours, if his own  
[Fungoso]"

SORDIDO says :

" How's this ! Yours, if his own ! Is he not my son, except he be his own son ? belike this is some new

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kind of subscription the gallants use . . . Here's a letter, indeed ! revels ? and benevolence ? ; is this a weather to send benevolence ? or is this a season to revel in ? 'Slid, the devil and all takes part to vex me, I think ! this letter would never have come now else.'

This letter, incidentally, shows Jonson's readiness to sacrifice character-realism (which Shakespeare rarely does in his letters) to classical allusion or pedantical manner. The spirit of the unrepentant prodigal is here unmistakeably : the letter is typical of all letters from impecunious youth to wealth-burdened age ; but the manner is too polished ; the recondite humour of the quotation from Cicero and the irony in the whole composition make it too good to be true.

But compare the real letter from Robert Herrick to his uncle, Sir William Herrick :

“ Cambridge : January, 1616.

“ Before you unsealed my letter, right worshipful, it cannot be doubted but you had perfect knowledge of the essence of my writing, before you read it ; for custom hath made you expect in my plain-song, *mitte pecuniam*, that being the cause *sine quâ non*, or the power that gives life and being to each matter. I delight not to draw your imagination to inextricable perplexities, or knit up my love in indissoluble knots, but make no other exposition but the literal sense, which is to entreat you to pay to Mr. Adrian Morice the sum of ten pounds as customarily, and to take a note of his hand for the receipt,

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which I desire may be effected briefly, because the circumstances of the time must be expressed. I perceive I must cry with the afflicted *usquequo, usquequo, Domine.* Yet I have confidence that I live in your memory, howsoever time brings not the thing hoped for to its just maturity ; but my belief is strong, and I do establish my hopes on rocks, and fear no quicksands ; be you my firm assistant, and good effects, produced from virtuous causes, will follow. So shall my wishes pace with yours for the supplement of your own happiness, and the perfection of your own posterity.

Ever to be commanded,

Robert Herrick.

To pay to Mr. Blunt, bookseller in Paul's Church-yard, the sum above-named.”

Here is the letter sent to Edward Knowell, junior (*Every Man in His Humour*, Act I, Sc. ii), and, unfortunately, opened and read by Edward Knowell, senior :—

“ Why, Ned, I beseech thee, hast thou forsworn all thy friends in the Old Jewry ? or dost thou think us all Jews that inhabit there ? Yet, if thou dost, come over, and but see our frippery ; change an old shirt for a whole smock with us : do not conceive that antipathy between us and Hogsden, as was between Jews and hogs'-flesh. Leave thy vigilant father alone, to number over his green apricots, evening and morning, on the north-west wall : an I had been his son, I had saved him the labour

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

long since, if taking in all the young wenches that pass by at the back-door, and codling every kernel of the fruit for them, would have served. But, prithee, come over to me quickly, this morning ; I have such a present for thee !—our Turkey company never sent the like to the Grand Signior. One is a rimer, sir, of your own batch, your own leaven ; but doth think himself poet-major of the town, willing to be shown, and worthy to be seen. The other—I will not venture his description with you, till you come, because I would have you make hither with an appetite. If the worst of 'em be not worth your journey, draw your bill of charges, as unconscionable as any Guildhall verdict will give it you, and you shall be allowed your viaticum.

From the Windmill."

A frippery was a second-hand clothes shop.

The Windmill was a house at the corner of Old Jewry, by Lothbury. It was used first by the Jews as a synagogue ; then by friars called the *Frotrs de Sacco*, because they were clothed in sackcloth. Later, it became a private house, in which several mayors resided. Then it was converted into a tavern with a Windmill for sign. The allusions are equally local in the words in which Knowell senior comments on the letter by Wellbred, his son's friend :

From the Bordello it might come as well,  
The Spittle, or Pict-hatch,  
all these being notorious places of ill-fame.

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

Speaking of local allusions (and returning to Falstaff), after reading the letter the Prince proposes to pay Falstaff a surprise visit. He asks : “ Where sups he ? doth the old boar feed in the old frank ? ”) (frank = pen in which hogs were fattened). Bardolph says : “ At the old place, my lord, in Eastcheap.” This was the *Boar’s Head*, “ a gabled house of four storeys, having canted windows and richly-carved panels. There is a door at the centre, and the lintel over the door is carved with ornament resembling a grape vine. We envision a long room with two tables and many stools. There are many guests, whose wants are attended by youthful waiters. Wooden platters, knives and wooden salt-cellars are in use. The fare is pork and souse, followed by a roast capon, and ended with a pudding which is served on the reverse of the wooden platters. Some have finished the victuals and are enjoying mazers of sack, with clean pipes and Virginian tobacco as finishing luxuries.”

This is how A. E. Richardson and H. D. Eberlein reconstruct such a tavern in “ The English Inn, Past and Present.”

#### 2 KING HENRY IV. ACT II. SC. ii.

Poins says he will steep Falstaff’s letter in sack, and make him eat it.

Compare “ Westward Hoe ” (Act V, Sc. 1) by Dekker and Webster, where Moll says to the other wives :

## SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

"To see what wine and women can do ! the one makes a man not to have a word to throw at a dog, the other makes a man eat his own words, though they were never so filthy."

This is apropos of the brand-new knight Sir Fabian Scarecrow, to whom she "gave the best words I could pick out, to make him ashamed of his doings." Her "best words," Carew Hazlitt thought, "are somewhat in Mrs. Malaprop's style of elocution."

## LETTER NINE

As it is getting dark in the scene between Valentine and the duke, R. Warwick Bond says of Valentine's note :

"The lines must be supposed written for earlier delivery and never sent, or else as intended to be drawn up to her chamber with the ladder, the actual meeting and elopement being fixed for a later hour. So in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. ii, the ladder precedes the lover . . . The lines form a regular Shakespearian sonnet lacking the first quatrain, like the ten lines spoken by Orlando, *As You Like It* (Act III, Sc. ii), and the ten spoken by Beatrice, *Much Ado about Nothing* (Act III, Sc. i.) Cf. for the sentiment sonnet 27, 'For then (*i.e.*, at night) my thoughts, from far where I abide,  
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee.' "

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

It is fitting that the lover should write letters in verse, for this play is unequalled, except by *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, in lyrical tone. One of the eminently lyrical passages (Act I, Sc. ii) is in the scene between Lucetta and Julia, especially about the letter which Lucetta has delivered to her mistress from the love-sick Proteus, and which Julia tears up, repenting immediately in sweet words :

" O hateful hands, to tear such loving words !  
Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey,  
And kill the bees, that yield it, with your stings !  
I'll kiss each several paper for amends.  
Look, here is writ ' Kind Julia.' Unkind Julia !  
As in revenge of thy ingratitude,  
I throw my name against the bruising stones,  
Trampling contemptuously on thy disdain.  
And here is writ ' love-wounded Proteus.'  
Poor wounded name ! my bosom as a bed,  
Shall lodge thee, till thy wound be thoroughly heal'd ;  
And thus I search\* it with a sovereign kiss.  
But twice or thrice was ' Proteus ' written down.  
Be calm, goodwind, blow not a word away,  
Till I have found each letter in the letter,  
Except mine own name : that some whirlwind bear  
Unto a ragged, fearful-hanging rock,  
And throw it thence into the raging sea !

\* Search=probe (medical) in order to clean. C.f. Bacon : *Of expense* : " Wounds cannot be cured without searching."

SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

Lo, here in one line is his name twice writ,  
‘ Poor forlorn Proteus, passionate Proteus,  
To the sweet Julia ’—that I’ll tear away—  
And yet I will not, sith so prettily  
He couples it to his complaining names.  
Thus will I fold them, one upon another :  
Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will.”

The scene a little before this, in which the serving-woman is told by her mistress to leave the rhymed note from Proteus where it lies :

JULIA. What is’t that you took up so gingerly ?

LUCETTA. Nothing.

JULIA. Why didst thou stoop, then ?

LUCETTA. To take a paper up that I let fall,  
suggests Younge :

“ Rosina came into my chamber to helpe me to make me readie, in dooing whereof, of purpose she let the letter (previously rejected by the heroine) closely fall, which, when I perceived, what is that that fell downe ? (saide I), let me see it. It is nothing, Mistresse, saide she. Come, come, let me see it (saide I) : Good Lord, Mistresse (saide she), why will you see it : it is the letter I would have given you yesterday. Nay, that it is not (saide I), wherfore shewe it me, that I may see if you lie or no . . . and althoughe I knew it well indeede, yet I saide, what, this is not the same, for I know that well enough, but it is one of thy lover’s letters.”

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### LETTER TEN

Dowden remarked that Hamlet starts his letter in the conventional high falutin', such as the Ophelias of the time would perhaps expect from a courtly admirer ; " then there is a real outbreak of passion and self-pity ; finally, in the word ' machine ', Hamlet indulges, after his manner, his own intellectuality, though it may baffle the reader ; the letter is no more simple or homogeneous than the writer." The machine simile occurs in *A Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) by T. Bright, who describes the body as a machine connected by an intermediate " spirit " with the " soul." The action of the body is compared to that of a clock. Machinery, although esoteric as the application of mechanics, was common as a symbolic idea. A Duke of Beaufort had already, 150 years earlier, invented a steam engine.

### LETTERS TWENTY-EIGHT AND TWENTY-NINE

#### *Duke of Burgundy to King Henry VI.*

In 1431 the English king had written a long and interesting letter to his " most dear and well-beloved uncle," the Duke of Burgundy, describing the trial and burning of St. Joan at Rouen. The sentiments about Joan are closely paralleled by Shakespeare when the dramatist introduces the subject (1st part, King Henry

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

VI). In 1429, seven years after his accession, Henry wrote the following letter to the citizens of Ghent, which is interesting for the references to "our crown of France." The eventual ousting of the English from Normandy was assisted by the King's marriage to Margaret, daughter of René, Count of Anjou, Maine, etc. :

" To our very dear and good friends, the churchmen, nobles, bourgeois, dwellers and inhabitants of the good city of Ghent.

" Right dear and well-beloved. We have been and are so well assured, by actual experience as well as by most credible reports, of the very great good will and loyalty that you have borne towards ourself and our crown of France, especially since it hath pleased our Creator, by His benign grace, to put into our hands the dignity and seigniory, and also, not long since, against the damnable and subtle designs of Charles, who is wont to call himself Dauphin, our adversary ; with which your service we are much pleased and satisfied, and take the same in very good part, and for good reason and always we shall hold your great loyalty in memory, and shall acknowledge it to the pleasure of God, to your honour and that of your successors in time to come ; and we exhort you so to persevere from good to better, as we have in you stedfast and perfect confidence. And, moreover, we notify unto you, for your singular comfort, that we are determined and resolved upon

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

receiving the holy sacring, taking our crown of England at the customary place, the 6th November next ensuing ; intending to take our departure, God willing, to our Kingdom of France, so soon as we conveniently can. And if you or yours desire any thing, you will ever find us disposed to listen in reason, as a sovereign and favourable lord to his loyal friends, vassals and subjects.

Very dear and beloved, may the Holy Spirit have care of you.

Given under our privy seal, at our palace of Westminster, the 18th day of October, 1429."

The marriage agreement was really between Henry the Sixth and René of Anjou. The leasing of the Duchies of Anjou and Maine to Margaret's father, which was taken advantage of to overthrow the authority of English rule, brought the King and Queen Margaret into popular disfavour, and led to Suffolk's eventual murder on board ship. The murder of Suffolk is described in two of the contemporary Paston letters. John Paston was a loyal supporter of Henry VI even for a time after Edward the Fourth's accession. The following letter from Robert Lord Hungerford and Sir Robert Whityngham to "the queen of England, in Scotland," *i.e.*, the exiled Margaret, is a good example of a real letter of "urgent business"; the references to previous letters remind us of the uncertainty of their reaching a destination.

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

" Madam, please it your good God, we have since our coming hither written to your highness thrice ; the first we sent by Bruges, to be sent to you by the first vessel that went into Scotland , the other two letters were sent from Dieppe, the one, by the carvel in the which we came ; and the other, in another vessel ; but, madam, all was one thing in substance, of putting you in knowledge of the King your uncle's death (*i.e.*, Charles VII of France, who died 22nd July, 1461, aged 60), whom God assoil, and how we stood arrested, and do yet. But on Tuesday next we trust and understand we shall up to the King (Louis XI) your cousin germain. His commissaries, at the first of our tarrying, took all our letters and writings, and bear them up to the King ; leaving my Lord of Somerset in keeping at (*the*) castle of Arques , and my fellow Whityngham and me (for we had safe conduct) in the town of Dieppe, where we are yet. But on Tuesday next we understand that it pleaseth the said King's highness that we shall come to his presence : and are charged to bring us up Monsieur de Cressell, now bailiff of Canse (Cannes), and Monsieur de la Mot.

Madam, ferth (fear) you not, but be of good comfort, and beware that ye adventure not your person, nor my lord the Prince, by the sea, till ye have other word from us ; in less than (unless that) your person cannot be sure there as ye are, and that extreme necessity drive you thence And for God's sake (*let*) the King's highness be advised the same ; for as we are informed the Earl of

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March (*i.e.*, Edward IV of England) is into Wales by land, and hath sent his navy thither by sea. And madam, think verily, we shall not sooner be delivered but that we will come straight to you, without death take us by the way ; the which we trust he will not, till we see the King and you peaceable again in your realm ; the which we beseech God soon to see, and to send you that your highness desireth. Written at Dieppe, the 30th day of August.

Your true subjects and liege men,  
Hungerford.  
Whittyngham ”

Sir Robert Whittyngham was killed in the battle of Tewkesbury, 1471. Lord Hungerford was beheaded in 1463, after the battle of Hexham. The above was in Anglo-French. The following is an earlier letter in 1450 from Queen Margaret, in English, to Dame Jane Carew. The Queen visited many of the country houses, trying to gain the goodwill of the English dames. Margaret Paston writes to John Paston in 1453 to tell of how her cousin Elizabeth met the Queen at Norwich during one of these visits. As in the letter by Margery Brews above, the original spelling of the following is left for comparison. It would have been written by the Queen's secretary :

*Margaret, Queen of Henry VI, to Dame Jane Carew.*  
“ By the Queen.

“ Right dere and welbeloved, we grete you well ; and,

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

for as moch as oure trusty and welbeloved Squier, Thomas Burneby, sewer of our mouth, aswel for the greet zele, love, and affeccion that he hath unto yor personne, as for the womanly and vertuouse governance that ye be renowned of, desireth with all his hert to do you worship by wey of mariage, bifore all creatures lyvynge, as he saith ; We, desiryng th' encres, furtherance, and preferring of oure said squire for his manyfold merits and deserts, as for the good service that he hath done unto my lord and us, and yet therin dayly continueth, praye you right affectuously, that, at reverence of us, ye will have oure said squire towards his said mariage especially recommended, inclynyng you to his honest desire at this tyme ; the rather by contemplacion of this oure praier, wherein we trust verreilie ye shul mowe pourvey right well for yor self, to yor greet worship and hertsease, and cause us to have yow both in suchetendernes and faver of our good grace, that by reason ye shul holde you right well content and pleased ; and how ye thinke to be disposed to our pleasir in this partie, ye will ascertein us by the bringer of these. As our singler trust is in yow.

Given, etc., at Eltham,"

### LETTER THIRTY

The identity of the writer of the letter to Hotspur has been a subject of speculation. George Dunbar, Earl of March (from whom a letter to Henry IV is extant) is one of the candidates for this immortality. But the

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

Earl of Northumberland, who sided with the King when the rebel's cause was lost on the field, seems a possible author. His joining the King's forces is referred to in the following letter from Henry, Prince of Wales (afterwards Henry V) to his father, Henry IV, in 1404 :

“ My very dread and sovereign lord and father, in the most humble and obedient manner that I know or am able, I commend myself to your high majesty, desiring every day your gracious blessing and sincerely thanking your noble highness for your honourable letters, which you were lately pleased to send to me, written at your castle of Pontefract, the 21st day of this present month of June. By which letters I have been made acquainted with the great prosperity of your high and royal estate ; which is to me the greatest joy that can fall to my lot in this world. And I have taken the highest pleasure and entire delight at the news, of which you were pleased to certify me. First, the speedy arrival of my very dear cousin, the Earl of Northumberland, and of William Clifford, to your highness ; and secondly, the arrival of the despatches from your adversary of Scotland and other great men of his kingdom, by virtue of your safe-conduct, for the good of both the kingdoms : which God of His mercy grant ! and that you may accomplish all your honourable designs, to His pleasure, to your honour, and the welfare of your kingdom : as I have firm reliance in Him that is omnipotent, that you will do.

### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

My most dread and sovereign lord and father, at your high command in other your gracious letters, I have removed with my small household to the City of Worcester ; and at my request, there is come to me, with a truly good heart, my very dear and beloved cousin, the Earl of Warwick with a fine retinue at his own heavy expense : so he well deserves thanks from you for his good will at all times.

And ‘whether the news from the Welsh be true, and what measures I purpose to adopt on my arrival,’ as you desire to be informed—may it please your highness to know that before my starting and since on the way, I have been certified that the Welsh have made a descent on Herefordshire, burning and destroying also the country, with very great force, victualled for fifteen days. And true it is, that they have made very great havoc on the borders of the said country. But, since my arrival in these parts, I have heard of no further damage from them, God be thanked ! But, I am informed for certain, that they are assembled with all their power, and keep themselves together for some important object ; and, as it is said, to burn the said country. For this reason, I have sent for my beloved cousins, my Lord Richard Warwick and the Earl Marshal, and others the most considerable persons of the counties of that march, to be with me at Worcester, on the Tuesday next after the date of this letter, to inform me plainly of the government of their districts, and how many men they will be able to bring, if need

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

be ; and to give me advice as to what may seem to them best to be done for the safeguard of the aforesaid parts. And agreeably to their advice, I will do all I possibly can, to resist the rebels and save the English country, as God shall give me grace, ever trusting in your high majesty to remember my poor estate, and that I have not the means of continuing here without the adoption of some other measures for my maintenance, and that the expenses are insupportable to me. And may you thus make an ordinance for me with speed, that I may do good service to your honour and the preservation of my humble estate.

My dread sovereign lord and father, may the all-powerful Lord of Heaven and Earth grant you a blessed and long life in all good prosperity, to your satisfaction !

Written at Worcester, the 26th day of June.

Your humble and obedient son,

Henry.”

Warkworth, in Northumberland, was the headquarters of the Percys. The chronicler, John Hardyng, who lived with Hotspur's family, says of the promises of help which were sent by various lords to the Percys, “ which letters I sawe in the Castell of Werkeworth, when I was Constable of it.”

The conspiracy of the Percys in 1403, included the Earl of Douglas, whom they had captured at the battle of Homildon Hill for the king in the previous year, Owen Glendower, the leader of the Welsh rebellion, the

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

Earl of Worcester, who was brother to the Earl of Northumberland, and Edmund Mortimer, whose nephew, Edward, Glendower was supporting as heir to the English throne. Edward was a prisoner in Windsor Castle. Hotspur's marriage to Elizabeth Mortimer, the mother of this Edward, was a factor in the quarrel of the Percies with Henry IV. The historical letters quoted here have a bearing on the subject of the play and afford comparisons of epistolary style, showing that Shakespeare was content to follow the originals pretty closely in the histories, as he does by satirical imitation in the comedies

#### PROSE PASSAGES. Page 144

Iago completes his advice to Cassio in these words (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. iii) :

" This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter ; and, my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before " ; which are paralleled by a passage in *Euphues* :

" Yes, yes, *Lucilla*, well doth he knowe that the glass once crased, will with the least clappe be cracked . . . But can *Euphues* convince me of fleeting, seeing for his sake I break my fidelitie ? Can he condemn me of disloyaltie, when he is the only cause of my disliking ? May he justly condemne me of treachery, who hath this testimony as tryal of my good wil ? Doth not he

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remember that the broken bone once set together, is stronger than ever it was ? ”

But the polished prose of Iago’s long speeches is indeed a refinement of euphuism.

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AN OLD SOLDIER’S LETTER

*Thomas Hostel to King Henry VI, in 1422.*

“ To the King our Sovereign Lord.

“ Beseecheth meekly your poor liegeman and humble Orator Thomas Hostell, that in consideration of his service done to your noble progenitors of full blessed memory King Henry IVth and King Henry V, whose souls God assoil : being at the siege of Harfleur, there smitten with a springolt through the head, losing his one eye and his cheek bone broken ; also at the Battle of Agincourt, and after the Taking of the Carricks on the Sea, there with a gad of iron his plates smitten asunder, and sore hurt, maimed and wounded ; by means whereof he being sore feeble and bruised, now fallen to great age and poverty ; greatly indebted ; and may not help himself ; having not wherewith to be sustained nor relieved but of men’s gracious alms ; and being for his said service never yet recompensed nor rewarded, it please your high and excellent Grace, the premises tenderly considered, of your benign pity and grace, to relieve and refresh your said poor Orator, as it shall

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A LETTER WRITER

please you, with your most gracious Alms at the reverence of God and in work of charity ; and he shall devoutly pray for the souls of your said noble progenitors, and for your most noble and high estate.”

#### EPILOGUE TO THE LETTERS

Other letters occur in Shakespeare’s plays, though not read out, *e.g.*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Act V, Sc. iii), the letter delivered by Balthazar, which enables the Prince to comment on the whole tragedy :

“ This letter doth make good the friar’s words,  
Their course of love, the tidings of her death :  
And here he writes that he did buy a poison  
Of a poor ’pothecary, and therewithal  
Came to this vault to die, and lie with Juliet.

In *Measure for Measure* (Act IV, Sc. iii) the letter which the Duke, disguised as a friar, tells Isabella to give to Friar Peter. It is, as letters usually are, except in the love comedies, an important message.

There are the log-rolling letters which Antony promised (*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act III, Sc. ix).

“ Friends · begone, you shall  
Have letters from me to some friends that will  
Sweep your way for you.”

#### NOTES HERE AND THERE

The “passport” by Pericles found in the coffin is hardly a letter, and may not be by Shakespeare; but here are the letters which came from a king and caused a woman to marry (*Comedy of Errors*, Act V, Sc. i) :

“ Whom I made lord of me and all I had,  
At your important letters . . . ”

And although we do not read those letters the friends promise each other, in the manner of all friends at the moment of parting (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act I, Sc. 1), we feel that they were indeed written :

“ To Milan let me hear from thee by letters  
Of thy success in love, and what news else  
Betideth here in absence of thy friend ;  
And I likewise will visit thee with mine.”

Among the Shakespeare letters which we are not allowed to read is the one from “ false Cresside ” that Troilus tears up, exclaiming, for all betrayed lovers :

“ Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart.” (*Troilus and Cressida*, Act V, Sc. iii).